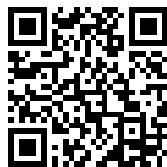
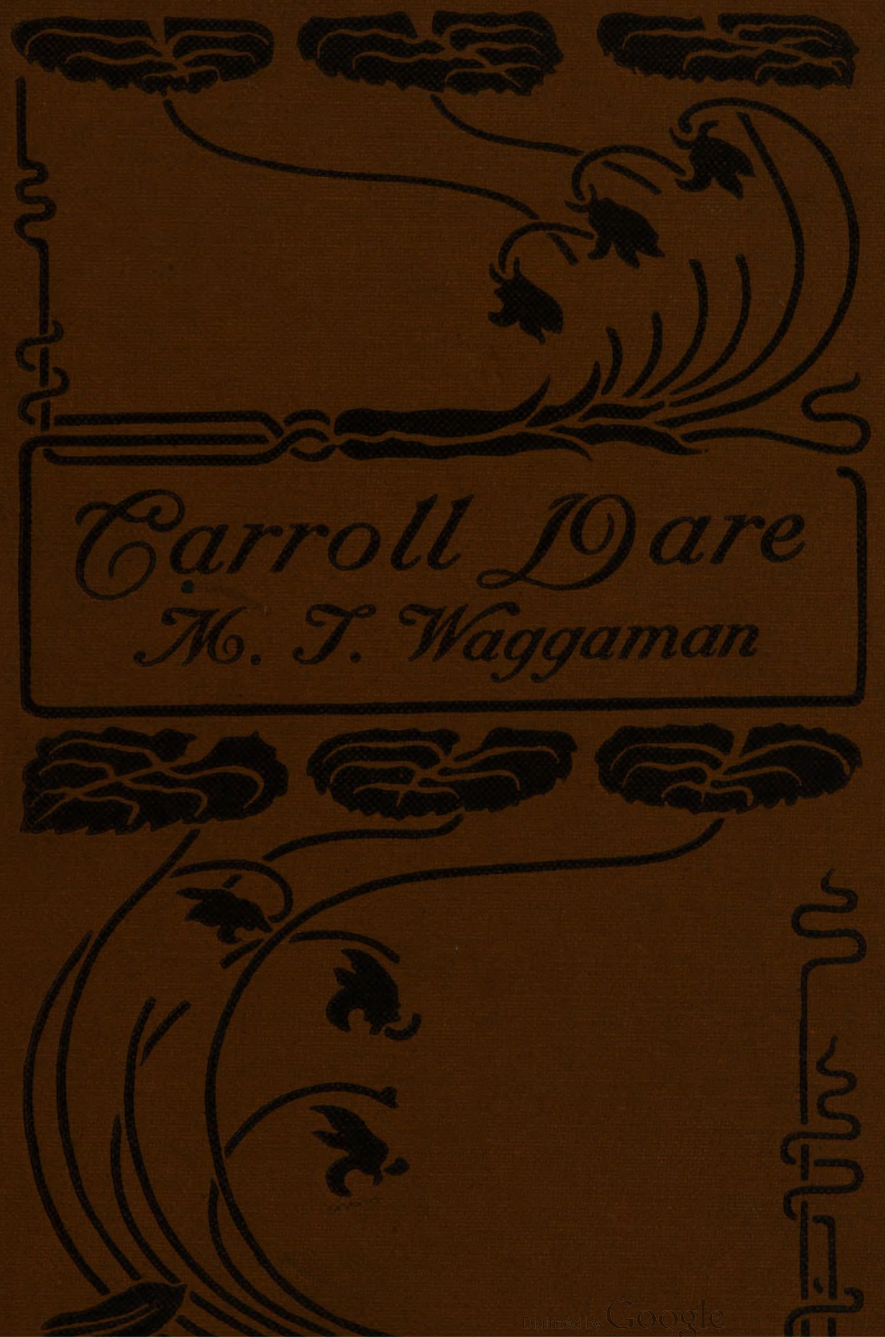

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A decorative border in dark brown ink on a brown background. It features stylized acanthus leaves at the top and bottom, with flowing, curved lines and small floral motifs connecting them. A rectangular frame encloses the text in the center.

Carroll Dare
M. T. Waggaman





Carroll Dare
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CARROLL DARE.



*"'At your service, messieurs,' I said, firing my pistol into the air."
(See page 105)*

CARROLL DARE.



BY
MARY T. WAGGAMAN,
AUTHOR OF "CORINNE'S VOW."



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CARROLL DARE.

CHAPTER I.

A DAY IN JUNE.

THE story which I have to tell begins on a fair day in June. For, though I am an old man, looking back on a peaceful, happy, and I may say in truth, an honored life, there is one brief stretch in it which seems blazoned forth in a fierce, lurid brightness, all unlike the rest. And it is of this period that, though naught of a scribe, I would in simple, homely fashion tell.

It was in the year 1791, and the roses were in bloom, sweetening all the summer air with their breath, for my mother loved roses, and they rioted like spoiled children all around Manor Dare, clambering up porticoes and pillars, peeping into the case-ments, tangling even the oriel window of the chapel in masses of sweet, thorny bloom. No one ventured to lay hand or pruning-knife on them, save at my mother's word, for she had the woman's craving for the beauty and sweetness of living things around her, and we were but a set of rough boys, with little grace or prettiness among us since our sister Elinor married and went across the sea.

And though it was a great marriage—for the Comte Armand de Montfort, who had come with his friend, the Marquis de Lafayette to America, was a brave and gallant gentleman, of the best blood in France—yet had my mother never ceased to grieve over the brilliant fortune that had taken the fairest flower of Manor Dare a thousand leagues away.

I was but a lout of fourteen at the wedding, with little thought of aught but the good cheer it brought, and the gay guests that

filled the chambers of Manor Dare until they could hold no more. In truth it was a goodly company, for the Marquis de Lafayette honored his compatriot's wedding with his presence, General Washington and his lady came in their barge from Mount Vernon, while my own godfather and namesake, Mr. Carroll, gave the bride away in place of the brave father who had died while fighting for his country's freedom five years before.

And what with the bonfires and barbecues on the lawn, the flag of our triumph and the lilies of France waving together from gateway and housetop, the officers in their glittering uniforms, and our beautiful Elinor, so dazzling fair in her bridal finery, it was a scene long to be remembered, though the voice of our good chaplain and tutor, Father Jorin, faltered sadly as he spoke the blessing, and my mother's sweet face was white as the widow's coif she wore.

And then, amid tears and smiles, and wailing and rejoicing, our fair bride was borne away by her gallant husband and we saw her no more. There was only the great portrait of her in her bridal robes, that hung in the drawing-room, and the white rose, "Ma fille," as my mother called it, that nodded in the chapel window, where Father Jorin said his prayers.

But though to little Roger and Martin, and even to Giles and to me, busied with our rough sports and games, God wot, much more than with our books and prayers—sweet Elinor soon grew to be a dim, shadowy memory, I think she was ever first in my mother's heart and thoughts. Four times a year there came letters from her, wonderful letters, telling of such feasting and gaiety and merrymaking as were never heard of in our own land, for our sister had been given high place at court, and was friend and lady of honor to the beautiful queen, Marie Antoinette, of whom she could write naught but loving praise.

And though my mother read these letters to her gossips with pride, and doubtless filled them with envy that they had no daughters peeresses of France, yet when alone she wept over the lines as if her heart would break. But far more bitterly she had wept of late, since for nigh a year no letter had come.

And it was of this trouble I was thinking, on this June morning of 1791, as I walked along the forest-path that stretched from Manor Dare through Sefton Wood, that, with its high, arching trees, and glades of greenery scattered with plentiful wildflowers, was a pleasaunce fit for a king, albeit only the hand of God had touched its beauty.

For three miles it skirted the highway, as we called the road battered by the rolling of heavy wains and hogsheads of tobacco, to the wharves of Manor Dare. But in Sefton Wood there was a shorter path, running shyly as a frightened hare through copse and underbrush to the gardens of Sefton Hall. And it was in this path that, from long habit perhaps, I was wandering, buried deep in thought, when a rose struck me full on the forehead, and a merry voice called:

"A farthing for your thoughts, Master Dare! Well I know they are not worth a penny!"

I looked up while my heart leaped in my breast, for there under the arching trees stood the little figure that drew me ever to Sefton Hall, as the magnet draws the steel. Even now I can close my dim old eyes and see the picture that met them that June morning as little Polly faced me in the summer sunlight, in her pink cotton dress and knotted kerchief, the sunbonnet that all her mother's scolding could not keep on her pretty head swinging back on her neck, leaving the nut-brown curls free to blow at their own sweet will. But of the winsome roguery in the dancing eyes, the laughing lips, the dimpled chin, no words of mine can tell.

Used as I was to her witchery it took me full a minute to gather up the wits her sudden presence had scattered and answer:

"Nay, a guinea would scarce pay for them this morning, so weighty are they, Mistress Sefton."

"Weighty!" laughed Polly, mockingly.

"With love and with fear," I continued.

"Love—and fear!" repeated the little scoffer, "truly those are new burdens for you to bear. When did they fall upon you, Carroll?"

"Of late only," I said, as, stung by her jibing voice, I vowed the little minx should hear naught of my trouble.

"Love and fear," she repeated in a graver tone. "I like not the pairing. If I loved, I could not fear, and if I feared, I could not love."

My heart leaped again at the softened melody of her voice, for well I knew she spoke the truth. She was brave as she was blithe, this glad Maryland maid.

"It is not for myself I fear," I answered, "but for one far dearer—"

"Ah! we are waking up in truth," cried Polly, gaily. "Only twenty your last birthday, and already there is some one dearer than yourself—a lady, of course?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Dark or fair?" demanded Polly, perching herself on a swinging vine that barred our path.

"Fair as a lily," I answered, looking boldly into the face that had the tint of a sunkissed peach.

"Ah!" Miss Polly seemed to draw a quick, startled breath. "Then I can guess. It is Martha Wynne, with her cornsilk curls—"

"Martha Wynne—and her cornsilk curls," I repeated. "No; I have never given her or them a thought."

"Then it is Letty Lee, with her white rabbit face," said Polly, eagerly. "No?"—as I shook my head again. "Then Susan Brent, who is pasty as an apple pudding."

"Nor Susan Brent either," I answered, glad of a chance to tease, for a moment, this true daughter of Mother Eve.

"Then—then, I can not guess," and the pretty brows knit in perplexity. "She is young and fair and beautiful, and you confess that you love her more than yourself. Ah, tell me who it is, Carroll," and Polly laid a coaxing hand on my arm. "Have I not always been your friend—almost your little sister since I can remember?"

"No, a thousand times no," I answered, so roughly that the pleading little hand dropped hastily. "I—I—mean that I have

but one sister, nay, God only knows if she is still left to me, for we have heard naught of her for months."

"Ah, I see, I see," and though the tone was soft with sympathy, Polly's eyes and lips and dimples broke into gladness. "It is your sister for whom you are grieving, Carroll."

"Aye, and my mother, who is nearly distraught with fear at the rumors that reach us from France."

"I have heard," said Polly. "The people are clamoring against the king. They would be free, even as we are here."

"Aye, but as Father Jorin says, it is far different. Our struggle was the birth throes of a new nation; there it must be the death agony of one old in folly and sorrow and sin. Already the king hath been set aside in his own councils, the people have risen against their rulers, there has been strife and bloodshed. Only yesterday Father Jorin was telling me of his fears, for he says he knows his people; they are not like ours—calm and strong. They will go mad as wild beasts when they once taste blood."

"And Elinor will be in the midst of them." It was my little playmate of old who spoke in tender sympathy now.

"Yes; though when we last heard from her she had left the court and was at Chateau Montfort for the health of the little fellow."

"Think you not, Carroll, her heart will be with the people—striving for their freedom even as we strove over here?"

"That I do not know," I answered, gloomily. "As a true wife she must hold to her husband's cause, and the Comte de Montfort, as a true noble, will stand by his king. And Elinor loves the fair queen as if she were her sister. It is no wonder my mother grieves, Polly, and that her hair is growing whiter each day. Little Roger, who sleeps in the closet chamber by hers, tells me that she weeps and sobs all night. For Elinor hath ever been nearest to her heart."

"Nay, then, I can not tell why," said Miss Polly stanchly. "With four sturdy boys, so brave and tender and true. Though"—the little witch stopped, and her softened eyes began to dance and flash again—"in truth men are dullards for daily company.

To be bound even to one of them would be a purgatory far worse than Father Jorin pictures."

"A purgatory! Then how will you marry, Polly?"

"How? Why, never," answered Polly, with a shake of her curls. "I will take my fling of freedom, and then hie me back to my dear Ursulines in New Orleans and don wimple and veil. Unless," added Polly, "I can find some one who will spend half his days in the woods with rod and gun."

"It is plain that you know naught of love yet," I said gravely.

"More than you can ever teach me, Master Wiseacre," was her saucy answer. "Tell me, Carroll, is it true that you are to be a priest?"

"A priest!" I echoed in surprise. "I have never thought of such a thing."

"Then you should begin to think," said Polly. "That is, if you have the head for it—which I very much doubt."

"I have neither the head nor the heart," I answered truthfully.

"But you have the air, Carroll, as my French teacher was wont to say. So grave, so strong, so steady. Giles now, *ma foi*"—Polly had caught pretty little tricks of speech in her French convent—"Giles can be twirled with a breath."

"And is that more to your liking?" I asked, bitterly.

"Much more—at a dance where you always tread upon my toes. But tell me more about Elinor," and Polly flitted from gay to grave again like the humming-bird she ever seemed. "She will be in my thoughts day and night now. Well do I remember her wedding. She would have me beside her to carry her flowers. How I swelled with pride, though I was only ten, and felt myself as great as any grown maiden there. Ah, how grand it was, and how beautiful Elinor looked with her lily face and golden hair under her wedding-veil. Ah, *mon Dieu*, why can not one remain a bride forever? As it is—" Polly shook her head and shrugged her pretty shoulders in a bewitching renouncement of wedlock that took me off my guard.

"As it is, Polly," I repeated. "Surely you know how it is, how it ever has been, how it ever will be. You know that I have

loved you ever since I can remember; that I can think of no time when my heart was not yours. Have you never had a like thought, Polly? We have been playmates, friends, comrades, all our lives, little sweetheart. Now—now, we are man and woman, and if God wills we can be something more to each other.”

She drew away the hand I had caught, flushing with maiden pride, anger, I knew not what. Ah, I was but an honest blunderer, dull in women’s ways.

“You do me too much honor, Mr. Dare. I believe that is the fitting thing to say—too much honor, and—*too little*.” There was a new ring in her pretty, mocking voice. “So, forsooth, you fancy that I have been nursing tender thoughts of you—unsought, unbidden—”

“Nay, Polly,” I faltered in dismay.

“The truth, sir, tell me the truth, as an honest gentleman!” she cried angrily.

“In truth, then,” I blurted out, for I could never lie. “I have sometimes thought your heart inclined to me, Polly—”

“Then think it no longer,” she answered with flashing eyes. “Because we have been friends and playfellows and neighbors I must lose both heart and head and maiden pride as well, and give a love that had never been sought.”

I could only stare at her dumbly. It seemed to my heavy wit that she must have seen and felt the love which had been such a part of my own life that to lose it would be like cutting my heart in twain. And why she was so wroth with me I could not tell. But as I have said I was dull to woman’s ways.

“I have ever been slow of wit and plain of speech, Polly,” I began.

“You have in truth,” she said sharply. “Any clown could do better,” and then she struck the cruelest shaft of all into my heart: “You should have Giles teach you how to woo.”

“Giles!”

It was as if a veil had suddenly been struck from my eyes, leaving them blinking and burning in the scorching glare of a midsummer sun.

Giles, Giles! Nay, then, why not? Had he not been her friend and playfellow, even as I?

But though there was little more than a year between us, I had ever looked upon him as much younger, so gay and light and careless he seemed in thought and speech, more of a boy even than quiet Martin, who was scarce fifteen. Giles, my brother, Polly's lover! Then, as it is said of drowning men that with the last gasping breath of life all its scenes pass before them, a thousand proofs of this bitter truth seemed to flash into my mind.

I saw Giles' golden locks blent with Polly's brown ringlets in the early days when they studied from the same primer that I had outgrown; I saw them stealing off in truant play, while I dived, in my slow fashion, with roots and verbs and figures, under Father Jorin's eye, that was always keener on me than the rest.

Then for four years little Polly vanished from us into the care of the good Ursulines in New Orleans, but there were summer days at home even then, when Giles and Polly played tennis on the wide lawn of Manor Dare, while I, who was not deft of hand or foot at the game, kept count for the others; and summer eves when Polly sang to Giles' guitar as our little skiff skimmed down the sunset river under the strong stroke of my oars.

Ah, truly, I had been dull of eye as well as ear, for was it not only the last week that going unexpectedly to Sefton Hall I had found them practising together the new dancing steps which Polly brought from Baltimore last spring, and which she vowed no one but Giles had grace enough to learn?

All this, that it takes long perhaps to tell, flashed through my mind as if by lightning stroke, while Polly still stood scoffing at me with strange, new anger in her eyes.

Then out of the bitter pain in my heart at last I spoke.

"I look to no man for teaching how to win a wife. She must take me, an' she will, at my own honest word, without tricks of speech. And if it be that Giles hath forestalled me in this matter, do not fear that I will stand between you, Polly. Nay, all that I can do for your comfort and happiness I will do."

"Carroll, Carroll," Polly stamped her pretty little foot im-

patiently. "It is you who are too quick of speech and fancy now. Have I said aught of Giles but that he could teach you how to woo—but whether his wooing be of me, or Martha Wynne, or Susan Brent—"

But she could not turn me from the point thus lightly; the thought of Giles as her lover had been seared into my heart. I was ever slow to learn and—slow to forget. And while we stood there for a moment silent there came a call through the sunlit arches of the wood that we both knew. It was the motto in the old crest our grandfather had brought from England, and that we boys had taken as a gathering cry whenever we scattered hunting or fishing in the forest. "We Dare, We Dare!" As the fierce old battlecry of our ancestors rang out through the summer woods the wild-rose bloom on Polly's cheek deepened into a quick, startled blush that told my jealous heart more than words could deny.

For it was Giles who called, Giles who came leaping and breaking through vines and underbrush with the swift grace that ever outran my greater strength. Giles, who, as he reached us cast her a quick glad glance, that darkened to my fancy as it fell on me, though he spoke lightly enough to the ear.

"Carroll, no wonder that I have shouted myself hoarse, in vain, over the tobacco fields. So this is the way you overlook the planting? Though in truth I can find no fault with your morning task, since I have been bidden to take your place."

"To take my place!" and God forgive me as I echoed his words, and felt in my heart all their cruel meaning. My blood seemed to boil in a fierce hot rage against this brother, who stood so gay and debonair in the June sunshine, mocking, as it were, my pain.

"And if it suit me to hold and not give it," I began, and then I stopped suddenly, catching a frightened look in Polly's eyes. "Who hath bidden you?" I asked shortly.

"John Lucas brought hurried message to the creek, where I was idling in my boat wondering if it were worth while to row up the stream. There is an eddy beyond Paca Point, where the water

is silvern with the shine of darting perch. And since it hath become my duty to gallant you, fair Mistress Polly, there are two rods in the boat and if you have mind for a few hours' sport—"

"Oh, yes, Giles, yes," said Polly, eager, as I could well see, to be quit of me. "Not an hour's fishing have I had this summer. Let us go. And Carroll," she turned to me with her own gay smile again, "if my luck does not fail I will send you home such a fast-day dinner as will surely atone for all my sins."

"And who is to look to the tobacco-planting?" I asked grimly, for in truth that was the day's work I had planned before Polly scattered my wits.

"Who?" echoed Giles, with a laugh and shrug of his shapely shoulders. "That I can not say. All that I know is that letters have come by special carrier from Baltimore, and mother hath need of you at once." It was enough to say. I turned away, and with a few hasty strides passed out of the wood into the glare and dust of the highway that led to Manor Dare.

And it seemed to me ever afterwards that I left something in those sunlit shadows that life never gave back to me. For though the summer may be deeper in color and richer in fragrance, and the autumn fruitage fuller of blessing, to neither of these is given the tender gladness of the spring.

I had gone into the woods with the boyish bloom of love and hope full upon me; I came out of it feeling like a young tree touched by an early frost.

I strode along over the fair fields of my patrimony (for after the English fashion, to which many still held, Manor Dare was entailed on the eldest son), bitterly heedless of my goodly heritage; the rich loamy tobacco-fields ready for the planting, the farther slopes green with shooting corn, the sleek cattle standing knee deep in clover, the barns, the granaries, the storehouses, and brooding as if with a deep content in the midst of all, the old mansion itself, spreading wide its wings under the sheltering oaks and chestnuts, the home of my fathers, my own and that of my children and children's children for generations to come.

But the thought that had ever given me pride and joy,—and

mayhap a certain sturdiness of manhood beyond my years, brought me no gladness this morning. Gloomily I passed up the garden paths where the roses ran rampant in trellis, and hedged in by stiff borders of box, all the first flowers of summer were in merry bloom. Father Jorin stood in the wide columned portico watching for me with anxious gaze.

"My mother?" I asked in affright at his troubled face. "Where is she, Father?"

"Within," he answered. "She hath need of your love and counsel, my son. We have had dire news from France."

CHAPTER II.

AN UNEXPECTED JOURNEY.

"ELINOR!" I said, with a sinking heart.

"Is a widow," answered Father Jorin, sadly. "The Comte de Montfort died six months ago."

"And we have heard naught of it!" I exclaimed in amazement.

"Her letters did not reach us; but come to your mother, my son, and you will learn all."

I followed him through the wide hall, where the sunbeams played hide-and-seek among the great oaken rafters, rough-hewn from the virgin forest more than a century before. And though in later years I have stood in the palaces of kings, and lordly castles, rich with painting and carving and tapestry, and all the cunning handiwork of older lands, I do aver that naught I have ever seen hath seemed to wear the true and simple dignity of this home of mine, reared and fashioned as it was by brave, strong men, too busy with greater things for Old World show. Little there was of furniture, though in the inner chambers the women of the house had gathered, as the years went by, much comfort, and even the simple luxuries of our time, cushioned chairs and stools and various little feminine trickeries.

But in this great hall,—the strong backbone, as it were, of the house,—there was only the sturdy touch of men. Guns, hunting-knives, fishing spears in goodly array, rested in the elk horns that branched from the wall, and whose wearer had been shot by my grandfather.

Stretched upon the polished floor that my mother kept waxed until it shone, was the pelt of the black bear that had well-nigh

finished me last winter in the Virginia mountains. So close was my hunt when he turned on me that I had to end him with knife instead of bullet.

Old Nanchita, my mother's nurse, had proudly cured and lined and fringed the shaggy hide into such comeliness, that Polly vowed it was gay enough for a lady's shoulder cloak.

And there, over the great chimney that yawned midway in the hall, framed in black oak, hung the yellowing parchment granting to his loyal knight and servant, Sir Roger Wraybourn Dare, five thousand acres of land in the Province of Maryland, on the banks of the Powtomack, and signed by the hapless Carolus I. Rex, more than one hundred and fifty years ago.

Up the broad staircase I followed Father Jorin, and into the room beside the chapel that was his study. Here were shelves of books in Greek and Latin, and the great globe which was the delight of our childhood, and of which, as well as the strange instruments that stood near it, we told such wonderful things to our playmates as to fill them with awe and dread of our good tutor, and make them often flee at his approach.

So had we boasted of his knowledge and his powers, of the black tube through which he showed us the Virginia hills lying close as our own box hedges, and the moon almost as near to us as our mother's face, and also of the strange little glass beneath which a drop of water seemed to be swarming with living things horrible to see. For good Father Jorin—God rest his saintly soul!—had wisdom and learning rare at his time in this new world of ours, and could have taught us much; but only little Martin had mind or care to learn.

As I entered the room to-day, old Nanchita, tall and straight and withered as a blasted tree, passed out. She had been ministering to my mother, for the air was pungent with the smell of the sweet herbs that women burn to revive those who faint.

My mother sate in the high oak chair in which Father Jorin was wont to hear us confess, and her face was death-white, save for the bright spots burning in either cheek. On the table beside her was a packet with broken seal and some close-writ pages.

"Carroll, my son," she said, and there was a piteous mutter in her voice. "Your sister—your—poor sister"—and then she stopped, choked with a sob.

I knelt down beside her and lifted her hand to my lips reverently, for, as Father Jorin ever taught us, there is a holiness in a mother's love and a mother's grief that naught in our ruder natures can approach. "You have heard of her dire straits," she said, striving to steady her voice.

"Only that she is widowed," I answered, mayhap too indifferently, for so blithely had I seen some of our fair dames wear their weeds that it seemed to me worse woes than widowhood might befall a beauty scarce twenty-three.

"Read the letter to him, Father," she said, taking the close-writ sheets in her trembling hand, and giving them to the priest who stood pityingly beside her. And Father Jorin read the letter that had come this morning, while Polly was mocking me in Sefton Wood. It is beside me now as I write, yellow and worn, but with the dainty tracery that has outlasted many of the weightier marks of my life still undimmed.

"MY DEAREST MOTHER AND TRUEST FRIEND:—

"I pray God that these lines may reach you, for so long hath it been since I have had tidings from my own country, that I am constrained to believe that evil hands have been laid on all the letters and packets that pass these, my prison walls.

"For such in truth is this, my castle of Montfort now, and lest you have heard naught of the woe that has befallen me I write again what I have transcribed before.

"On the twenty-sixth of December, my gracious lord and husband, Armand de Montfort, was foully done to death while hunting in his own forest, leaving me a hapless widow bereft of all that I held most dear. And since that woeful day all things grievous have been heaped on me, so that the cup of my sorrow hath in truth brimmed o'er.

"No words can tell the terror that doth prevail in this unhappy land, the fierce tumult and uprisings and revolts among the people mad with hunger and want and woe. The Comtes de Brille, de

Verron, the Marquis de Bonne, and many more of our friends have fled from the country; the highest and holiest in the land are threatened by new powers, who have risen, as it were, like whirlwinds, sweeping all things before them.

"Their most gracious majesties themselves have had to endure insult and contumely unspeakable, with the mob breaking into the palace, penetrating to the royal chambers, threatening even the sacred persons of the king and queen. But for the courage and firmness of our own good friend, the Marquis de Lafayette, God knows what further terror might have followed.

"The same good marquis sent me secret message two months ago, to return at once with my child to my own home, until these troubles should be over.

"Oh, my mother, would that this were possible. My aching heart yearns for my own country and my own kindred, for the shelter and safety of my dear home, for your pitying love, and good Father Jorin's saintly counsel, for the glad voices of my young brothers, for all the sweetness and comfort and strength I would find in your tender embrace. But it can not be; without friend or protector to guard me and my little Armand, I dare not venture on a way beset with perils that a weak, widowed woman may not brave alone.

"Much more I might say, but lest this fall under evil eyes I dare not.

"Pray for me, dearest mother, and if such misfortune befall me that I can not write to you again, I beseech you, when it is possible, to take my little Armand unto your love and care—for the sake of your most loving and hapless daughter.

"ELINOR DE MONTFORT."

"Nay, then, we will wait not to befriend the child," I spoke up quickly. "Elinor herself must be our first and dearest care. Mother, I must go to her."

"Did I not say so, Father?" cried my mother in trembling triumph. "Carroll, Carroll, you are the true son of your brave father, ever wise and strong and faithful. Bring your sister back to me, and my blessing will be upon you in all its fulness; it will

rest upon you in life, and in death, and upon your children and your children's children forever. It will follow all your future life and brighten it."

She had risen to her feet as she spoke, and her face shone through its pallor, as I have seen the face of the Blessed Mother shine in our chapel window, when the sunset burned in the western oaks.

But Father Jorin spoke gravely.

"Remember, my daughter, this is no light mission. It may be fraught with dangers and difficulties and lead even into peril of death."

The light faded from my mother's face, and sinking back into her chair she burst into a passion of tears.

"True, true, I had forgotten the danger. Carroll, you must not go, you shall not leave me, and yet—Elinor, my poor Elinor! Oh, my God! my heart is torn betwixt its love and its fears. I know not what to say."

"Nay, then, I do know surely, and without doubt," I answered. "I go to my sister's help. I read a notice at St. Mary's that Captain Josiah Brent's ship, the *Liberty*, would sail from Baltimore next week, for Havre and Antwerp. I will leave at once and secure passage in her."

"My boy, my own brave, good boy. Oh, if I should lose you, too, Carroll!" My mother was sobbing with almost the weakness of a child.

"Fear nothing for me, dear mother," I said, pressing her hand in both my own. "Elinor is a woman, the Countess of Montfort, the widow of a French noble, the mother of his son. She, indeed, may be in danger from the hate to her rank and race. But I am only Carroll Dare, the young American, a son of the new republic across the seas. For me these mad Frenchmen will only feel friendship and favor. So fear naught. I will bring back Elinor and her boy in safety, to keep merry Christmas at Manor Dare."

And thus, as it often takes but one strong man's word to steady the wavering balance of a woman's will, it was settled that I should

leave that night, as indeed from Elinor's letter it seemed she was sore in need of some rightful protector.

How the news spread I knew not, but soon it was flying from mouth to mouth that Master Carroll was to sail for France and bring home Miss Elinor.

My younger brothers Martin and Roger were clamoring at my heels, eager and curious, and mayhap a little envious of my journey to that fair land, of which Father Jorin had told them so much. But that the venture was to my own fancy I can not truly say. Mine own broad inheritance, with its smiling fields and shining river and waving forest, seemed to me as goodly a share of God's earth as man could crave.

For my own country's weal, freedom, or safety I would gladly, as my brave father had done, pour out the last drop of my blood, but for journeying and farings afar, I had neither wish nor thought until to-day, when the cry of my sister's need roused in me a resolve stronger than desire. Amidst all the talk and tumult around me, with my mother weakening and beseeching me not to leave her, with Father Jorin speaking ghostly counsel as to one venturing into peril of death, with the servants questioning and wondering, as they bustled about preparing the linen and woollen garments for my journey, my thoughts ever turned to the creek, where, little caring for me or my passing, Giles and Polly were still loitering in the summer sunshine.

Giles and Polly! A fierce pang rent my heart as I thought of leaving them thus together, to grow ever closer and dearer, until their lives should knit into one wherein I would have no share nor interest.

Nay, if evil should befall me it would be for their greater good, for then Giles would be master in my place. And striving with this bitter thought, I strode down to the stables to give parting orders about my horses and dogs. The hounds came leaping to meet me as was their wont, and as I stroked their tawny heads, I saw that the cheek of old Bevis was laid open with a raw cut from mouth to ear.

"Who has done this?" I asked fiercely, for Bevis, though old

and toothless now, had been the true and tried comrade of many a boyish sport.

"Master Giles cut at him with his riding-whip yesterday," answered the ostler-boy. "Bevis jumped on him as he was mounting and muddled his new coat."

I muttered an angry oath under my breath. Giles was as careless with dumb brutes as if they could feel no pain.

"Take Bevis to old Franks, and see that his cheek is salved and plastered," I ordered. And then passing into the stable I led my own filly Bess out into the sunshine.

She was three years old, and the pride of the stable. Her black coat shone like satin, and her mane and tail, soft and waving as a maiden's hair, fell nigh to the ground. None but I had as yet bestrode her, and as she laid her head on my shoulder, with a low whinny of delight, it smote me with a pang to think that another, careless and cruel, might have the mastering of her now.

"Eh, sir, but she do love ye!" said old Luke the stable-keeper, looking on her admiringly. "An' if it were Master Giles that came near her like that, she would rear and kick so that none could hold her."

"Good!" I said grimly. "Keep her at that trick with Master Giles, and it will be five golden guineas in your pocket on Christmas morning, Luke."

"Truly a brotherly parting word," said a voice near-by, and looking up I saw Giles, his face flushed with sudden anger, beside me.

"Brotherly or unbrotherly, it must stand," I answered. "I would not leave Bess to your mastery for half my inheritance."

"Keep the brute for your own—I will make no claim upon her. You leave me all I ask," Giles answered, and there was a gleam of triumph in his eye as he spoke that awoke what my father was wont to call the Dare devil in my blood. But I only set my teeth together, and continued to stroke the filly's mane.

"You might have given me friendlier greeting," said Giles. "I have lost a morning's sport and my breath as well racing over here to have a word with you. Polly and I were having rare luck

in the creek, when Peter Maxwell shouted to us from the shore that you were off for France to-night, and so startled us with the tidings that we dropped as fine a string of fish as I ever saw back into the water. I pushed the boat ashore, and left Polly to fly home with the news, while I ran here to learn—all."

Ah! he might have told me more if I had not angered him. He might have set my heavy heart to leaping, if he had told how Polly had gone death-white at Peter Maxwell's tidings, and then burst into tears and tremblings that Giles himself could not soothe; he might have added that she had fled home to hide the grief that she was too proud to show at Manor Dare.

But of all this Giles said nothing for he was not like me, fierce and outspoken, but gay and debonair even in his wrath. And so I was left to think that Polly cared so little for my going that she would not stop, as was often her wont, at Manor Dare to bid me farewell.

"You will go to Sefton Wood again?" asked Giles gaily.

"No," was my blunt answer.

"What—you have parting words for horse and dog, and none for a pretty sweetheart, Carroll?"

"I have no sweetheart," I answered, "and hark you, Giles"—as I turned to him I felt the swarthy flush rising to my cheek that warned me the slow fire in my blood was bursting into flame. "Let there be no jest betwixt us in this. If you have won, and I have lost, it beseems us to win and lose like men, not prating boys."

"Prating boys!" repeated Giles. "In truth this journey seems to have soured a temper never over-sweet, Carroll. But let it be as you wish," and again there was a flash of triumph in his eye. "I will be dumb on sweethearts though I might tell you something to think of on your journey."

"You need not," I said hoarsely. "I can guess your tidings. Polly is to be Mistress Dare—"

"Aye, if I can read a woman's face and voice and heart, she will," answered Giles, with a smile that made me feel, God forgive me, as if I could throttle him.

"Shall I tell you more, Carroll?" and again voice and smile seemed to mock my bitter pain.

"No," I thundered forth in a passion of rage and despair I could no longer control. "What devil has set you on me this morning to madden me with your boastings? I warned you to be silent and you come to me babbling like a fool of what all true men hold sacred."

"It is you who are the fool," he answered, stirred into open anger at last, "a dull, blind fool. And dull and blind you may stay for aught of me."

Turning on his heel, he left me to enter the stables; a moment after he came dashing by me on his own wild mare Firefly, giving me never a look or word as he galloped down the road. And so I and my brother parted for many a long and bitter day. And between the two partings with him and Polly it seemed to me that the rest of my stay at home was all a daze, as of one stunned by a double blow. I scarce remember the leave-taking. I know that my mother wept and clung to me, and good Father Jorin gave me parting blessing; that my younger brothers clamored to go with me to Baltimore and see the ship in which I was to sail, but this my mother refused; that the servants, black and white, crowded about me to say good-by, and many followed me on foot to St. Mary's, though it was a good ten miles to the wharf, where I took boat, reaching Baltimore in time to secure my passage on the *Liberty*, and pay a friendly visit to my godfather—who received me with great kindness, and gave me much fatherly counsel regarding my journey. He introduced me also to a Monsieur Beauchamps, who had lately come from Paris, and who told me so much, as we sate over our wine at the General Wayne Inn, as to chill the blood in my veins, despite the generous warmth of a good bottle of old Madeira. "La belle France," as he described it, was in the throes of a Revolution to which our noble struggle was indeed as death to birth.

As I listened to his stories of mobs and massacres and burnings—of women armed like furies, and shrieking at the palace doors for bread, of hangings and beheadings and bloodshed everywhere,



"I listened to his stories of mobs and massacres and burnings."

my heart sank within me, not indeed at my own peril, but at the thought of Elinor, and the long weeks that must pass before I could reach her side.

Monsieur Beauchamps also advised great caution and secrecy about my mission. The Comtesse de Montfort, as he truly said, had been a favorite of the queen, and so bitter was the feeling against that hapless lady that all who had loved and served her were regarded with suspicion.

"Monsieur Dare, you will need to have great prudence—prudence beyond your years," said my new friend, with a kindly smile, for the good port was warming his veins. "And," he hesitated for a moment, and then spoke gravely, "because you are so young and are venturing into unknown perils, I speak this word of warning—beware of Jacques de Montfort."

"Jacques de Montfort!" I repeated, for I could not remember hearing the name. "Who is he?"

"Ah, you do not know— He is the noble Count Armand's younger brother, a half brother only. His mother was of the people—a peasant girl. And so this Jacques de Montfort hath a strain in his blood unlike the rest of his race. Doubtless he will meet you with smile and friendly greeting—but do not trust him. There is an old saying among my people—'*Main de fer sous gant de velour*,' and that iron hand under the velvet glove Jacques de Montfort will outstretch to you I am sure. I know him, monsieur," the speaker's face darkened with a look of deadly hate, and then, as if shaking off a painful memory, he added: "But I have said enough—one glass more"—he filled to the brim—"To your pleasant journey, monsieur, and happy return."

And tossing off the draught lightly he arose and proposed a visit to the playhouse which had been newly opened, and in the charm of this novel entertainment I lost sight for the time of the perils and terrors of which my companion had warned me.

I had time enough to think over them in the weeks that followed, for I embarked on the *Liberty* next day, with a cargo of tobacco, much of which was taken from my own storehouses, and one hundred guineas fastened securely in a pouch belt about my waist,

for Monsieur Beauchamps had advised my bearing no bills, nor letters of credit, but put my trust only in English gold.

There was no passenger save myself, for in truth with dearth of money at home, and wars and tumult abroad, there was little to tempt travel just then across the sea. Good Captain Brent and his sturdy crew had all they could do to manage the ship and keep a lookout for the pirates and freebooters whom the troublous times had let loose upon the sea in swarms. Twice we were chased by villainous-looking craft, that hung upon our lee for a day or more, until outsailed by the *Liberty*, which was clipper built, and had the spring and lightness of a maid in her first teens.

So the long summer days passed without misadventures. Long days indeed they were to me—long and strange, with the great waste of waters ever widening between me and home and country, while the blue of sea and blue of sky seemed to stretch in never-ending space; it was as if earth had vanished forever, with all that it held dear. I was like one dead and hovering between two worlds, as I have heard souls are sometimes held in punishment for their sins.

Until, at last, I was startled from a dream of home and Sefton Wood and Polly in her pink gown and sunbonnet, by a hoarse shout above me, and springing from my berth I rushed up on the deck to find the dawn breaking rosy-tinted over a faint blue shadow in the eastern horizon.

“Land ahoy!” cried Captain Brent, clapping my shoulder cheerily. “Carroll, my lad, there is France.”

CHAPTER III.

"LA BELLE FRANCE."

WE landed at Havre that night.

I remember little of the town, save that it looked old and overcrowded, and that the women in their high caps and flowing lappets seemed both ill-favored and ill-dressed in contrast with the roguish face under the pink sunbonnet in Sefton Wood. The town was garrisoned with Swiss soldiers, whose clanking weapons doubtless kept it in order, for there was naught of riot or disturbance to be seen, and men and women went about their work as if there were no tumult in the land. But there was a Liberty pole in the market place, and the tricolor was everywhere—in the hats of the men and on the breasts of the women, waving from house-top and window and belfry, so that the dull, narrow streets seemed to be bedizened with tawdry finery, unbecoming their age.

"There is fever in the air, Carroll," said Captain Brent, after we had passed a day among the wharves and warehouses, striving to get a fair price for our tobacco, "the fever that only blood-letting cures.

"What with the foreign armies pressing on the east, and the ocean on the west, and the whole nation run mad over a fool's cap of Liberty with no brains under it, France isn't the place I like to leave Colonel Roger Dare's son in just now.

"But I'll touch here again in six weeks, and if you and the Comtesse de Montfort" (sturdy republican that Josiah Brent was, he rolled out the title as if it were sweet to his tongue), "are ready to go back with me—it will be the best thing ye can do to get into a healthier climate than this."

To this assertion I fully agreed, and having arranged with the captain how and where to dispose of the tobacco, on which we

could get no profit in Havre, I grasped my old friend's hand in a cordial good-by, and feeling, as he said, that I thus slipped the last hawser that bound me to my own home, I took the diligence for Rouen.

The comfortable vehicle, the smooth, well-kept roads, the well-tilled fields and vineyards stretching on either side, made a scene of peace and plenty that might well have deceived keener eyes than mine; but I was soon to learn that neither men nor nations can be judged by the first greeting.

The diligence was well filled. Most of the passengers were men, but there was an old lady, who seemed to be of some importance, traveling with her maid. The latter was put on the outside, while her mistress made herself as comfortable as her great hooped skirts and high headgear would allow in a cushioned corner, where she fell into a doze that lasted the greater part of our journey. I could not but contrast the picture she made with her great bonnet and puffs towering above a wrinkled face ghastly in powder and rouge, with the memory of my own dear mother, in her simple black gown and widow's coif, and my heart grew so heavy with homesickness that to divert my thoughts I began to attend to the lively talk of my neighbors. Most of them, as well as I could judge, were en route for Paris, and they rattled on in a way that, though Father Jorin had made me a fairly good French scholar, I found it hard to follow, about king and conventions, journals and Jacobins, emphasizing their words with such gestures and grimaces, such nodding and shrugging, as I had never seen. I suppose my own face told my stupid surprise, for one of the gentlemen opposite suddenly addressed me in English:

"Monsieur is a stranger in France—an Englishman perhaps?"

"No," I answered quickly, "an American."

"Pardon, I should have seen. But until of late it seemed the same. American! Ah, yes, monsieur is to be congratulated. He has a great country, a country whose future will be beyond all the stories of the past. It is monsieur's first visit to France?"

"Yes," I answered briefly, for despite his courteous tone and words there was something about the speaker that did not invite

my confidence. He was of tall and soldierly build, with a certain air of distinction, but he had the hawklike nose that I never fancied, and his eyes a trick of narrowing like those of a snake.

"But," he continued pleasantly enough, "you find us little, I suppose, a mere play land, after your mighty mountains, and forests and rivers. We must seem very little and very old."

"Old, without doubt," I answered, determined in my turn to be polite; "but it is age with a charm that in our new land we miss."

"That is very true," he said, smiling. "Though monsieur has chosen an unfortunate time for his visit, if he would see us at our best. France is in a tumult that obscures much of her charm. I fear monsieur will find even gay Paris a disappointment."

"My journey is one of business, not pleasure," I answered, without adding that Paris was not my destination, so had distrust of those narrowing eyes grown upon me.

"Business, not pleasure," he echoed with a smile and a shrug. "Monsieur is young—to be so wise."

And then he turned from me to the neighbor on his right, whom he doubtless found more entertaining, for soon he had drawn him into excited discussion on the questions of the day. But more than once I felt that keen narrowing gaze fixed on me curiously, as I sate back in my corner dull and silent, but with ever-growing comprehension of the conversation around me. Until now French had only been a matter of lesson and book; here for the first time it seemed infused with spirit and life.

The diligence swept on with much blowing of horns and crackling of whips, and in truth the horses seemed to need all the courage that cheering sounds could give, so lean and ill-fed they looked after our sturdy American beasts.

And now beyond the dazzle and glare of this gay, sunny land, I began to see the shadows deepening.

We passed villages to which in our land we would not have given the name; low, roofed houses with earthen floors, with the barn close against the wall; dark foul places in which we Maryland planters would not house our blacks; we passed through little

towns where long lines of women were clamoring around the bakers' shops, waiting for the scanty dole of bread with which their rulers hoped to stop their mouths; we passed fields where mothers were working like beasts of burden, their little ones crying as they strove to totter after them across the upturned soil.

And once, down a road that crossed our way, there came a band of ill-looking rustics, with huge pikes in their hands, singing lustily the new song which had found its way even to our shores, *La Marseillaise*.

Then, most ominous of all, as we mounted a wooded hill, the blackened walls of a great chateau arose like a fire-writ cipher against the sunny sky.

"*Eh bien*," said my hawk-nosed neighbor. "There has been a brave blaze here the last week. Chateau Egremont is gone."

There was an excited outcry as the passengers crowded to the windows calling to the coachman to stop that they might see the wreck. But it was late in the day and he drove on unheeding them.

"The Count is in England—no, in Flanders," corrected another speaker. "He fled last year."

"Ah, *mon Dieu, mon Dieu!*" cried the old dame in the corner, who had started from her doze at the general movement. "The Chateau Egremont gone! Ah, my poor Cecile, my poor Cecile! all her beautiful tapestries, her paintings, her ormolu— Ah! these peasants, these vile peasant slaves, it is their work! But they shall be paid for it, they shall be paid for it!" she continued, in a tremor of rage.

"Madame is too good," said my neighbor with his unpleasant smile. "There are some who would count the balance on the Comte d'Egremont's side still. Was it not ten years ago that the little village of Bois-chêne was put to the flame, that Monsieur le Comte might extend the pleasure grounds of his new wife?"

"And why not, monsieur, why not?" asked the old dame sharply. "A score or so of foul, smoky huts was little to sacrifice for so fair and noble a bride as Cecile d'Orville."

"Very little, indeed, madame, very little. But even a smaller thing is the nest of the wasp, or the hive of the bee, or the hole of

the snake. And yet when these are smoked out of shelter, they turn and sting."

The last word made me start as if I heard beside me the hiss of a forked tongue.

"Yes, yes," said the old dame, quite unconscious of any fierce meaning in the last speaker's words or tone. "That is it, the reptiles, the insects' sting, and like reptiles, like insects, they shall be crushed."

Again I caught the gleam of those narrowing eyes, and it was that of a snake when it is coiled to strike. But he did not answer and left her to groan and bewail over the loss of her friends, and the crimes of the accursed peasants until we reached Rouen, which was not until the close of the day.

The streets were narrow and ill lit, and not caring to explore them in the darkness, I engaged a room at once at the Hotel d'Orient, whence my coach would leave next morning, and after a supper fair enough but for its too-plentiful besprinkling with garlic, I went to bed and to sleep.

My way lay to the east through the country of the Somme, for Chateau Montfort was in Picardy on a spur of the Ardennes, and from all I had heard a wild, lonely place, even in more peaceable times than these.

It was small wonder that our young and pretty Elinor had preferred the gay court of Versailles to her husband's gloomy patrimony.

I was to take coach from Rouen to Amiens, and had been told we must make an early start. Whatever our faults across the sea we were no sluggards, and I had been accustomed to wake with the day. It was scarcely light when I started from my bed, and remembering the *garçon's* warning hurriedly dressed and descended to the coffee-room, to find that I was fully two hours ahead of time. The church bells were ringing the Angelus, and I recalled what Father Jorin had taught us about the great Cathedral of Rouen, a canticle in stone, as he called it, rising forever in praise of God.

Not knowing how or when I would pass here again, I thought

I would walk out and see this great church, and perhaps hear an early Mass in thanksgiving for my safe voyage. The narrow streets were still dim, for the houses with their projections that nearly met across the passageway kept them in shadow far into the day, and as yet the sky was just flushing with the dawn. The bells were still chiming, but 'twixt the confusion of the dimness and the echoes I could not follow the sound, though in my native woods I could track every bird by its call.

As I stood perplexed at a corner, not knowing which turn to take, I saw a man in workman's dress approaching, and stepped forward to ask him the way to the Cathedral, when the words were suddenly hushed on my lips.

For beneath the workman's cap I saw the narrowing eyes, the hawk-like nose of my traveling companion of yesterday. I could only stare in honest amazement, so startling was the change in him; yesterday he had been the elegant gentleman in fashionable coat and waistcoat, laced cuffs and clocked stockings, gold snuff-box and watch, yesterday his powdered hair had been carefully dressed in queue—to-day coarse unkempt locks fell beneath his greasy cap, he wore the coarse, loose blouse, the unwashed shirt of the French *ouvrier*.

"*Eh, donc*, what is it?" he asked gruffly, though I fancied there was a momentary gleam in the narrowing eyes that met my stupid stare. Even his voice (if it were indeed he), had changed. The Parisian accent of the day before had become the surly harsh *patois* of the peasant. I was mistaken in the man surely, I thought, and I asked as soon as I could collect my scattered wits:

"Will you direct me to the Cathedral?"

"The Cathedral!" he repeated, "Monsieur is early at his prayers," and again the narrowing eyes seemed to mock me. "Take the second turn to the right, just up there."

I took the direction he pointed, wondering if I had been bewitched, that this face I did not like should be following my wanderings. The turn led into a passageway bridged by another house, beyond which there seemed to be a network of lanes and alleys, crossing and recrossing like the spiders' webs that we used

to find sparkling with dewdrops in the rose hedges of Manor Dare in the early morning.

"Fairy lace," Polly used to call it, and stay our rough boy hands when we would brush it away, for, as she declared to us with pretty childish fancy, it was the gossamer that the spiders were forced to weave every night to robe their mistress the fairy queen. Polly! little Polly! she was my last conscious thought, for just then, passing a vaulted doorway, a crashing, blinding blow fell upon me and I knew nothing more.

* * * * *

How long I lay dull and senseless I can not say, but it must have been for many hours that I drifted to and fro in the narrow strait that lies between death and life, sometimes nearing one shore and then the other.

Then slowly, as when the dawn steals over the hills, life began to brighten to me again. At first all was the unreal shadow of the past. I was in Sefton Wood, with the sunshine glinting in its green hollows, I was rowing Polly up the river with Giles singing to his guitar in the boat, the clang of the noontide bell was calling the blacks from the tobacco fields, little Martin was droning his French lesson by Father Jorin's rose-wreathed window. Little Martin—no, my slow waking wit affirmed it was another, a deeper voice.

"He is dead," it said, and the grim word seemed to have no interest for me—"dead as a stone."

"May the good God grant not—without blessing or absolution, poor child," said a gentler voice. "He seems a mere youth, Pierre, though well-grown."

"Young and well-grown enough," answered the other, "and with a full pocket I warrant as well, ere he got into this trap. Robbed and murdered and thrown here to rot if I had not chanced to come by, to look for that little whelp of a Jou-jou, who strays down here to hunt the rats, when madame would have her kept on a silken cushion and fed on cream. *Sapristi!* When I stumbled over a pair of sturdy legs my heart stood still."

"It was a mercy of the good God," was the reverent reply.

"Let us lift him out into the air, Pierre. Jean, hold the candle before us. We must give him a chance for prayer and repentance, if not for life." Then at last I realized that it was of me they spoke, for I found myself lifted by strong but kindly arms, while by the faint light of a taper flickering before me, I saw that I was being borne from some foul, hideous, darksome place into purer open air, and I drew a long, tremulous breath that seemed to fill my long-clogged lungs with an elixir of life. Then, from the movement and change perhaps, I grew dizzy and unconscious again, and when I recovered my wits it was to find myself in a comfortable bed, my head bound stiffly in linens and plasters, so that I could not turn, and a face brown and wrinkled as a walnut looking down on me.

"So there! now he will do, *mon père*. He will need no ticket for paradise yet. Quiet and rest and watchfulness that is all, and he will be ready for another fight in a couple of weeks. 'Tis a youth of sturdier build and of thicker head than we grow in France, or it would have taken more than a plaster to mend him after such a crack. Some English heretic I fear, *mon père*."

"Nay, no heretic at least, for he wore Our Lady's medal and scapular," said the gentle voice I had first heard, and turning my heavy eyes I saw an old man—gray-haired, but of ruddy, benignant countenance, standing at the foot of my bed. He wore the shabby soutane which the memory of Father Jorin made dear to me, and I felt, with a thrill of almost womanish tenderness, that the blessed guardianship of my boyhood was about me still.

"Doubtless it was that good Mother who protected and saved him," added the speaker reverently.

"Perhaps!" answered the brown-faced little doctor, "though in truth, *mon père*, La Toile d'Araignée is not the place to look for Her clients."

"Ah, monsieur, we who are old know how often young feet stray unaware into evil ways," said my kind friend, for as such even did my dull wits recognize the good Père Etienne.

A friend indeed the kind canon, for such was his rank,



"I found myself lifted by strong, but kindly arms."

proved in the days that followed, days that found me helpless, penniless, dependent on his charity. For a while I did not realize it; my dulled brain was conscious only of comfort and care, of the simple, spacious, but austere room, whose sole ornament was an ivory crucifix; of the white-capped old Nanette, wrinkled and rosy as a winter apple, who waited on me with broths and tisanes, and bowls of sweet milk; of the little brown doctor who looked in on me each day, with quick-piercing, long-trained eyes, but more than all these to my sluggish mind and slow-pulsing heart was the kind, gentle, old man, whose fatherly care and tenderness seemed to surround, to enfold me, as if I were indeed a son.

As my head grew clearer, I began to think, to question. Then slowly and by degrees proportioned to my weakness I learned all.

I had strayed, or perhaps had been misguided into *La Toile d'Araignée*, one of the worst sections of Rouen, and so called from its peril to strangers. I had been found, half stripped and well nigh dead, in the vaults of a deserted wine-shop, whose cellar connected with that of old Pierre, one of the sweepers of the great Cathedral, who added to his small stipend by caring for and training pet dogs. In search of one of these—the "*Joujou*" of a wealthy patroness—he had stumbled upon me just as the night was falling that would doubtless have been my last on earth. It was Pierre who, in his terror lest he should be held in some way accountable for my mishap, had hurried at once to *Père Etienne*, who had come so happily to my aid.

My belt and money were gone, the small trunk holding my clothing and papers which I had left strapped and locked in readiness for the coach, had been carried off none could tell me where or how.

And during the five weeks of my illness Captain Brent had come and gone, taking back with him to America the money from the sale of my tobacco—for we had agreed that in case he neither saw nor heard from me on his return to Havre he would understand that I had taken speedier passage home. I was practically a beggar, a thousand leagues from home and friends, and utterly

powerless to proceed on the mission with which my mother had entrusted me.

Often had Father Jorin rebuked me for the sturdy pride of my nature, which would not bend or yield but kept stubbornly to its purpose in defiance of all that stood in its way.

"Thou hast the spirit of the fallen angels, Carroll," he would say, shaking his head.

Truly I was in a plight to teach me littleness and humility now. The love of my youth had been denied me, and now the strength and independence to which I had trusted lay like broken reeds at my feet.

But even in my childhood I was never known to whimper at a blow, and indeed why should I now trouble with my perplexities the kind strangers to whom I already had been burden enough. But the anxiety that fevered my blood again, and kept me from eating or sleeping, could not be concealed from my kind, fatherly host.

He came into my room one midnight when I lay awake, my brain buzzing with the perplexities pressing upon me.

"*Bien, bien*, this head is too busy for sleep," he said, laying a gentle hand upon my burning brow. "Thou art troubled, my son, and doubtless with good cause. Come, let us talk it over together."

I thought to go from him bravely and gratefully, without making further claim upon his kindness, but he took a seat at my bedside and with the tender skill learned by long years of medicining human sorrow and sin he drew from me all that I was striving to hide, my perplexities, my fears, my utter helplessness.

"Ah, this is bad, very bad," he said. "Truly, as the old heathens would say, an evil fate seems dogging thy footsteps, my son. Is it possible that thou hast an enemy in France?"

"Quite impossible that I could have either enemy or friend excepting my sister, and, for the last few weeks, you, my good father."

"Then it can not be," he continued thoughtfully. "Though

these are dark days in which all evil powers seem to wax greater and stronger, until I tremble to think of what may be the chastening before poor France. As she has sinned so she must suffer. But thou art of a land still virginal in its youth and innocence, a land on which rests no curse from generations gone by. I would that out of my own purse I could set you on your way, my son, but so narrowed are our revenues within these latter years that we have little but the pittance for our daily needs. But I have heard there is an American minister in Paris whose business it will be to befriend and help you."

"Gouverneur Morris!" In my stupid despair, I had not thought of him as the representative of our nation's power in this Old World. Truly I was young and ignorant of many things yet, as this story of mine doth doubtless prove.

"You must go to Paris then, my son, as soon as your strength permits. For that I can furnish you with the means—as a loan, of course," he added hastily, fearing to distress me after his confession of poverty. "Once there, all will be right with you, I am sure."

Aye, I was sure, too, for I could give names and references that would convince Mr. Morris of my standing and position, and these, with my good friend the canon's letter, would procure me the immediate help of which I was in such sore need. And soothed by this surety I thanked my kind friend out of the depths of a grateful heart, and turning upon my pillow, slept peacefully once more in his fatherly care, little dreaming of the perils that were before me still, and into which I was venturing like the sleepwalker—who dares height and depth with wide-open eyes that can not see.

CHAPTER IV.

IN GAY PARIS.

My kind friend was as good as his word, and in less than ten days, with my clothes rehabilitated, my traveling expenses paid, and a couple of louis in my pocket, I was on my way to Paris, there to lay my troubles before the good American gentleman, who, amidst all the discord and tumult of the times, was upholding the dignity of our new republic.

I will not dwell on my journey, save to say that it lay through scenes which grew more and more exciting as we drew near to Paris.

Great military camps, depots or arms, of provisions, *barrières* at which we were stopped to show our passports—good Père Etienne had been careful to provide me with one—all showed me that the heart of the nation was pulsing at fever-beat, and something in my own young nature began to thrill with responsive excitement.

Père Etienne had given me a letter to his friend, the curé of the parish of Sainte Thérèse, who received me kindly and offered me the hospitality of his modest little home. He was a simple, kindly man, serving God and His poor in one of the lowest sections of the great, tumultuous city, and holding, as I learned, a wonderful influence over the restless tides seething around him.

But as we sat over our frugal little meal the night of my arrival, he spoke with hopeless resignation of the situation.

"Yes, I can hold my poor children yet, monsieur, but it will not be for long, not for very long. The fever is burning in their veins, and it must break out at last. Sainte Thérèse will go as

Sainte Antoine and the rest. May God pity and forgive us all when those dark days shall come."

And when, in those dark after days, I read good Père Veuillot's name in the list of the sufferers, I felt it was a saintly old martyr who had won palm and crown.

But as I sallied out the morning after my arrival, Sainte Thérèse was quiet still, women were at work and children at play, the *lampe* swinging quietly over the narrow streets had borne no bloody burden. I crossed the bridge that led into the better portion of the city, and was soon in the midst of such life and gaiety as I had never seen before. All seemed light and color and brilliancy, carriages and horsemen pressed through the streets, the cafés and shops were filled with gaily-dressed crowds; flags, badges, soldiers, music, merriment everywhere.

So does the flush and sparkle of deadly fever often mimic the beauty and bloom of perfect health. I had seen Baltimore and Philadelphia, but they were as quiet villages to this wonderful Paris; like the country lout I was I loitered on my way, staring at all around me—the beautiful women, the gaily-dressed men, the pictures of plays and operas, the new fashions in windows of tailor and modiste, the confections in sugar and pastry.

I was but twenty-one, and though in truth I had had enough of late to turn my mind to serious things, all these gauds and fripperies still had charm for me, especially as I have ever noticed that a close bout with death gives life a new zest and flavor. Mayhap, too, a sense of poverty never felt before set me to desiring the unattainable.

I had just turned my wistful gaze from the window of a jeweler, "Approved by Her Majesty, the Queen," and was thinking how the pretty necklace of pearls I saw there would beseech a fair, rounded throat I knew, when a courteous voice greeted me in English.

"Ah, Monsieur L'American, again well met! So Paris has laid its spell upon your wisdom after all."

I started, I can not say with pleasure, for it was my acquaintance of the hawk-nose and narrowing eyes again. There

could be no doubt of his identity this morning. Dressed in the latest Parisian cut of "redingote," gloved, booted, laced, his hair curled and perfumed in the mode that had begun to supersede powder and queue, this was indeed the courteous and elegant gentleman of the Rouen diligence, and I felt that the workman of that fatal morning must have been only a bewildering fancy. Yet as I grasped the offered hand which I could not civilly refuse, I was conscious of the same creep in my blood that I had felt once, when, in searching among the sedges for a bird that I had shot, my touch fell upon the slimy scales of a gliding snake.

"When did you arrive?" asked my companion cordially and pleasantly.

"Only last night," I replied.

"And your hotel?" he questioned again.

"I am stopping with a friend," I answered, and then, anxious to escape from this unwelcome company, I added: "I am on my way to our Minister, Mr. Morris, with whom I have important business."

"Always the business, the business," he laughed. "It is the American password. I have had the pleasure of meeting your Mr. Morris in some of our Paris salons, where he is very popular, like all you Americans—Monsieur Franklin, too, that wonderful magician who taught us to draw lightning from the clouds, I met him at Passy some years ago. A wonderful old man, so sturdy, so simple, so wise. Ah, what a land of promise yours is, monsieur, and what glorious patriarchs and prophets are your leaders therein. That Declaration of Independence—is not that what you call it? I have read it ten, twenty, forty times. Ah, what majesty of manhood it speaks! Monsieur, that Declaration of yours has made every throne in Europe shake."

As he spoke thus of my country I felt my heart warm to him in despite of myself. I was so young, so homesick, so alone in this strange, gay land! And after I had made some civil answer to his praise he cast his eyes upon me with much seeming kindness and asked:

"Is it my fancy, monsieur, or have you indeed grown

thinner and paler since we last met? This Old World seems to have stolen something of your ruddiness."

I replied that I had indeed been very ill and close to death.

Then he grew still more friendly in his sympathy, and naught would do but that I must come with him into his hotel, which he said was near-by, and have a flask of Chianti wine, which would warm my blood and bring the red to my cheeks again. And as in my own country it would seem churlish to refuse such hospitable courtesy, I went with him to the hotel, which I found to be a sumptuous place, with much glitter of gold and mirrors and marble, and such a running to and fro of lackeys in livery to serve us, that the memory of the narrow-eyed workman seemed to grow dimmer and dimmer, and I felt that my companion must be a very great personage indeed.

He ordered not only the flask of Chianti, but what he said our English cousins call a "bite" as well; dainty, toothsome dishes, so tricked out with herbs and sauces as to tempt more critical palates than that of a youth of twenty, just on the rebound to health.

And as even in my old days I have found there is naught like good food and drink to loosen wits and tongues, I was soon telling my host all about my misadventure in Rouen, saying nothing indeed of the fancied likeness to him in the workman, for I had by this dismissed that thought as an idle fancy of my brain, but giving a full account of the perilous strait from which good Père Etienne had rescued me.

"Robbed and well-nigh murdered!" exclaimed my companion. "Truly, France has given you a poor welcome, monsieur—monsieur—ah, I forgot, we have not yet exchanged names. I know you only as the young American fellow-traveler whose bright face and honest eyes I could not forget."

"My name is Dare, monsieur, Carroll Dare," I answered.

"Eh, what is that? Dare, Dare—I should know that name! Dare, of the State called Maryland—the Comte de Montfort married a Mademoiselle Dare."

"Yes, monsieur. She is my sister Elinor."

"*Mon Dieu*, is it possible!" exclaimed my host, excitedly. "Your sister, monsieur! Then I may call you kinsman. For I am your beautiful sister's brother-in-law, Jacques de Montfort. What a surprise! what a pleasure! what joy inexpressible!"

I could not echo his words. For the moment indeed I was like one struck dumb. This Jacques de Montfort! As Monsieur Beauchamp's warning, Elinor's strange letter, flashed back into my memory, all my first doubt, mistrust, repugnance, to this man awoke in full strength. Whether I showed this or not I can not say, but if I did my companion's enthusiastic delight seemed to feel no chill.

"Carroll, Carroll Dare, ah, *mon ami*, I know that name well. You are the oldest, the best-beloved brother, the head of the house! Ah, what happiness this will be for Elinor—the beautiful Lily of Montfort, as she is called—what happiness! For of course you will not leave France without seeing her?"

"It is for that I came, monsieur," I blurted out honestly. "Can you give me tidings of her? I am most anxious to know of her health, her safety. That she is in widowed grief and desolation I know."

"Ah, yes, it was a terrible blow, the death of poor Armand. Shot down on his own grounds, while out with a hunting-party, none could tell why or how. So brave, so gallant, so young, scarce twenty-eight. You knew him, *mon ami*?"

"Only slightly," I answered. "I was a mere boy at the time of their marriage—six years ago."

"True, very true. The Countess is crushed with grief, of course, Monsieur Carroll. She is at her chateau in Picardy, with the little Armand. A noble boy, a worthy heir to the name, so bright, so bold, so beautiful. Not very strong, but he will grow more so every year. But all this you will see for yourself. I will be happy to be your escort, lest more harm befall you in these troublous times, to the home of my fathers. In the meantime there must be no question of an appeal to Mr. Morris. I will be your banker, Monsieur Dare, for any sum you wish. My hotel here must be your home. I claim you as my right-



"I was shown into the little convent parlor."

ful guest, as were Jacques de Montfort a stranger in your country I feel sure you would claim him." And again did this man's charm of courtesy prevail over my repugnance, and I agreed to all that he asked.

I went back to Sainte Thérèse to get my few little belongings there, and to tell my good friend Père Veillot of what truly seemed a fortunate meeting. After a hasty word of farewell, for the good priest was just setting out on a sick-call, I dropped into the church to ask God's blessing on my new departure, for indeed much of the cocksureness which I had brought from my own land had vanished since my late experience in Rouen, and I felt my own simple wisdom and wits were no match for the craft and skill of this older world.

Sainte Thérèse was a very old church, poor in ornaments and offerings, but with the dignity and sanctity of a holy place that for centuries had echoed with the praise of God, the prayers of men. Père Veillot had told me that the ancient edifice, somewhat remodeled, and renamed in later years, had been built by Saint Louis in memory of his mother, and had in the far past been held in especial veneration by the royal families of France, until the ever-widening gulf between the rich and poor sections of the city had cut it off from the favor of the fashionable ones.

As I knelt before the pale altar light that had been glimmering like a guiding star through so many centuries, I was glad to think that my own fathers had been among the first to kindle its pure flame in our New World across the sea. And, as ever, in such holy moments of quiet, the picture of that dear, far-off home came back to me, and forgetful of my own needs I prayed for God's blessing on the loved ones I had left behind me, even on her to whom I was striving to give a sister's name and place in my aching heart.

And though there may be some who doubt the record it was indeed only of this little lost love of mine I was thinking when I was startled by the sound of sobbing, and looking about me through the dimness of the low arches, I saw a woman

kneeling at the altar rail, her head bowed, her form trembling with the passion of her grief.

She was dressed and veiled in black, and while I was wondering pitifully whether it was sin or sorrow that had brought her thus lowly to God's altar, she suddenly rose with a quick, impetuous movement, and swept down the aisle, her veil flung back that she might press her handkerchief to her weeping eyes.

She did not see me, and indeed I fairly held my breath as she passed, so loth was I to seem an intruder upon her grief or humiliation. For in all my life I had never beheld so majestic a woman.

She was tall and fair, with a mass of silky brown hair rippling back from her brow, and eyes that the mist of tears could not dim. It was like the brief vision of the moon through a storm-cloud, for as she passed me she dropped the veil that reached to the hem of her dress, obscuring both face and form, and with swift, imperious step hurried from the church.

Then, waiting a moment that she might be well gone, for I would not have intruded my presence upon her for a kingdom, I, too, rose to return to Monsieur de Montfort, and as I did so saw glimmering on the stone floor where she had just passed, a jeweled rosary. I picked it up, and found it was indeed a treasure of great value, every bead being a blood-red ruby mounted and strung in gold.

I stepped out of the church into the vestibule beyond, thinking the loser might still be within sight, when of a sudden I was confronted by another black-robed and veiled figure. In truth Sainte Thérèse seemed a meeting-place for mourners to-day.

"Monsieur has my rosary?" she asked, eagerly.

Now dullard I might be, as Polly had always said, in aught that pertained to woman, but I was not to be deceived by any such plain witchery as this. For veiled though she was I could see this was not the mourner of the church at a glance. She was slender and petite, with no majesty of height or mien, but the lithe grace of girlhood in every movement. And to give up a

rosary worth, it might be, two hundred pounds to the first pretty claimant was too stupid a bit of folly, even for the blockhead that I had proved myself in this older and craftier world across the sea.

"Pardon, mademoiselle," I said with the best grace I could put into such graceless words. "I think you mistake. The lady who dropped this in the church a few moments ago was much taller and older than mademoiselle."

Now if I had thought this turn of speech would save me I was surely mistaken. Mademoiselle turned upon me with fire in her tone, fire, I am sure also in her veiled glance.

"You doubt my word, monsieur? I tell you the rosary is mine—that it was I who dropped it in the church here scarce five minutes ago."

Was there ever an honest man in a sorrier plight? Gladly would I have given up the rosary to her and been done with it, but a sturdy sense of justice withheld me, for that it was the other woman who had dropped it I could have sworn. It was not on the church floor until she passed me by. Mademoiselle saw my perplexity and took advantage of it.

"Monsieur," she said, and her voice was tremulous and beseeching now, "as you are a gentleman do not hesitate. I am in—in great haste—and trouble. For God's sake give me the rosary and let me go."

"Mademoiselle," I said, "it is impossible. I saw the lady who dropped it."

"Saw her!" exclaimed my companion with a start. "*Mon Dieu*, even here, at the foot of God's altar, she can not escape her enemies! Even here where she comes to plead in her wretchedness with the sainted sovereigns of France, she is watched, hunted, spied upon, betrayed!"

"Again pardon, mademoiselle," I said patiently. "I know nothing of plots, intrigues, espials. I am a stranger in France—an honest American, who simply stepped into the church for a moment to ask guidance and help in this troubled land, where he seems to meet dangers and difficulties on every side. As

for this rosary, which I was so unfortunate as to pick up—I can not, according to my sense of justice and right, give it to any one but the lady who dropped it almost at my feet.”

“Monsieur, can you not believe, can you not understand that it was my mistress, my—*mais, mon Dieu*, I waste my time, my breath, on this stupid savage of an American. Come then, come, come; since we can do no better you shall return it yourself to her—clown, fool, that you are!”

It was not an encouraging invitation, but something about this vivacious plain-speaking recalled another little lady that I knew, and despite the lies that had tripped so glibly from her tongue, I could not altogether doubt this petulant new acquaintance, so I followed her some fifty or sixty feet until the byway we trod suddenly ended at a high stone-wall overgrown with ivy.

“Monsieur will have the civility to wait until I announce him,” said my companion, and pressing her way through the ivied wall she disappeared as if by magic.

Four, five, ten minutes I waited, until I began to tire of what I believed my little lady’s trickery, when of a sudden the ivy parted again and she was at my side. Her veil was thrown back now, and showed the bright, roguish face of a girl not more than eighteen, yet with a keenness in the dark eyes, a firmness about the lips, that told her brief life had not been passed in Sefton Wood or Manor Dare.

“*Bien*, Monsieur Honesty, you can come in. Though if I had not periled my soul by swearing to all manner of things that I do not know, you could never have passed this blessed gate.” And she swung open a postern hidden by the ivy.

“What have you sworn about me, mademoiselle?” I asked, hesitating on the threshold.

“That is my business, monsieur. When there is need of a lie I tell it, as you may have observed. I know nothing about you, Monsieur Honesty, but that you are a dull, graceless American, who will not take a lady’s word. But for the present I give you a very good character in my charity. You are a young American missionary, monsieur, of great virtue and wisdom.

Twice have you been—what is it you call it—wiggled, no scalped, by the red Indian savages in your wilderness, and hence you have a martyr's privilege to enter here."

"But, mademoiselle!" I gasped, "these are all—"

"Lies? *Eh, bien*, I know it. Let them be upon your head, Monsieur Honesty, for madame must have her rosary, if I lose my own little soul. Come, come, there is no time to waste."

I followed her through prim paths bordered by quaintly-clipped hedges, to an old stone house widening cheerfully into arched passage-ways and green with ivy like the outer walls. The faint sound of chanting came from some inner sanctuary, but otherwise the place was grave and silent as a tomb. It did not need the sight of the old portress who opened the grilled door for us to tell me that I was in one of the convents under the ban of the new despotism that was attacking all things high and holy in this once Catholic land. Happily for my own self-respect, for I took no pains to sustain the false character my companion had given me, I was not admitted into the cloistered precincts, but shown into the little convent parlor, where, indeed, standing by the window and filling the bare dim room with the gracious majesty of her presence stood the owner of the rosary.

"Here he is, madame," began my guide eagerly. "Here is the Monsieur Honesty who would listen to naught I could say, but must bring the rosary to you himself."

"Pardon me, madame, if I have unwittingly intruded upon you," I said, "but in truth I knew not what to do. The jewels seemed to me of such great worth that I dared give them to no one but the owner—who once having seen, I could not mistake."

I gave her the rosary, and as I did so, guided by I know not what impulse, I knelt and kissed her hand.

"Camille," she said sharply to the little lady beside me, "What hast thou done? This is no priest."

"Madame, that I do not know. I thought all Americans were either heretics or priests, and he was praying at Sainte Thérèse—and therefore could not be a heretic. So I thought it no harm to tell good Sister Berthilde—"

"Ah, *mechante*, you have been learning logic from Monsieur d'Autun, I fear," said the elder lady chidingly. "But since it is no worse let it pass. Monsieur has restored me a treasure that I hold most precious. It was a gift from my mother—one that all the jewels of France could not replace. If he will accept some slight souvenir from me in return for his kindness—" and she slipped a costly ring from her slender finger.

But I recoiled, flushing with the sturdy pride of the Dares.

"It is reward enough to know that I have served madame ever so slightly," I answered, I fear somewhat stiffly.

"Fool, clown!" I heard mademoiselle mutter behind me, while her mistress cast on me a glance of haughty surprise, that softened after a moment into bewitching graciousness.

"Pardon, monsieur, I forgot. You come from a happy land, where faithful service asks no reward, where the men are all kings, and the women queens. At least let me know your name, that I may remember it among my friends."

"Thanks, madame; that is indeed an honor that Carroll Dare will be proud to claim."

"Dare," repeated the lady thoughtfully, "Carroll Dare. The name hath a friendly sound. But so many woes have pressed on me of late that memory hath grown dull both to friends and foes."

"The fiacre is waiting, madame," said mademoiselle. "There will be another rumor started that we do not pray according to law."

"True, true, little one, though the quiet of this place soothes me. Or perhaps it is the benediction of Saint Louis and his happy mother that has already fallen on my troubled soul. Take monsieur back to the gate, Camille. Once more I thank you for the kindness you have shown to—"

"Madame!" interrupted the girl, starting forward nervously.

"To Madame Capet," concluded the lady with a winning smile, extending her hand to me. Again I bent and lifted it to my lips, and then followed mademoiselle through the grilled door.

Not a word did she speak to me until we reached the ivied gate. Then she turned to me, her eyes dancing roguishly.



"Ah! You are back safe, I am glad to see."

"Monsieur, a piece of parting advice which you may take or refuse as you did madame's ring. You are far too dull and too honest for this wicked, clever land. Go back to your own as quick as you may, lest you leave your heart or your head here; per-chance both."

"Thanks, mademoiselle," I replied, not to be outwitted by her. "I have risked both this morning in your company, and have escaped unharmed."

"*Bien, bien!*" she said, gaily. "Monsieur Honesty, you are not such a fool after all. Good-by, or, perhaps if the Fates so decree—*au revoir.*"

And she almost thrust me through the ivied gate and closed it with a quick-shot bolt.

With my thoughts still busy on this morning's adventure, I made my way back to Monsieur Jacques de Montfort. The door of the hotel stood open and, unaccustomed to the ceremony of the Old World, I entered unannounced.

But as I reached the door of his apartment, I heard my fellow traveler's voice raised in tones of high excitement.

"I tell you I must have the money. It is not my business to tell you how it is to be paid. I must have it to-morrow."

"But, monsieur, it is impossible!"

"Bah, bah, impossible! There is no such word to Jacques de Montfort. Make it possible, *mon ami*, or I warn you it will be worse for you." I stepped forward, not wishing to be an eaves-dropper. "It is enough," my host was saying to an old man, who stood in dire perplexity before him. "Go, monsieur, and remember. Ah, *mon ami*," and as his visitor turned slowly from the room, Monsieur de Montfort bent his most gracious look and smile upon me. "You are back safe, I am glad to see, without any more adventures. *Bien!* I have some tiresome business that will keep me in Paris until to-morrow, but there is good in all things. You shall see some gaiety before we leave. There is to be a *soirée* at Madame Lavanche's to-night. We French dance even though the world crumbles—so we will go together."

CHAPTER V.

WEBS AND WITCHERIES.

THE courtesies and civilities that Monsieur de Montfort now heaped upon me as his guest I can not describe. Lodged sumptuously at his hotel, with liveried lackeys at my call, all the money I needed for comfort or pleasure placed generously at my disposal, no host could have been more friendly or even more brotherly in his kindness.

And yet, withal, there was a sleeping distrust of him in my breast, of which I could not rid myself.

My senior by at least fifteen years, connected closely with my family by his brother's marriage, this rôle of friend and counselor might surely have commanded my perfect confidence; yet even when we sat over our late dinner, with the rare wine flowing that usually unlocks hearts and lips, I found myself, warned by some subtle instinct, speaking to him guardedly and with restraint. He told me much of my sister—of the beauty, grace, and wit that had made her one of the brightest stars of the court. Happily for her, he added, the health of little Armand had necessitated her return to the pure air of Chateau de Montfort, "but of this doubtless she had notified us?" And I fancied the narrowing eyes questioned my face curiously.

And I answered with caution that so my mother had heard, adding naught of the fear and anxiety the letter had caused, and which had brought me in such haste to France—so far to my own ill-fortune.

"I said happily she had been obliged to return to Chateau de Montfort, Monsieur Carroll, because the court is no place of safety for a noble lady now. The troubles are deepening every day; their

majesties, the king and queen, are practically prisoners in their own palace. The end has not yet come," concluded my host, as he pushed the wine-bottle over to me to refill my glass. "The people have wakened, *mon ami*. Ah, the people! You know not what that word means here. In your country it is the name for simple virtue, truth, courage—in your country it is *vox populi, vox Dei*, but here, monsieur, crushed, starved, beaten, bound by cruel taskmasters for generations, the people wake like a tiger thirsting for blood, and even now all France echoes with its growl."

As he spoke there seemed a gleam in his eyes that reminded me of the hungering beast he had named. But he soon turned to lighter themes, and talked of the operas, theaters, dancers, the last new game at cards, touching indeed upon things which I did not care to hear or see, for he was a man of the world, and doubtless used to its evil ways. But seeing that I was but a simple country youth, and it being no part of his plan to scandalize me, he proposed that we should go, as he had suggested, to the *soirée* of Madame Lavanche that night.

"To-morrow, I trust, we shall be able to start for Picardy, so this will be perhaps your one chance, *mon ami*, of seeing Paris at its best. Madame herself is one of the old noblesse, but her husband belongs to the people's party. He is a wealthy banker, whom the terrible times have not yet been able to ruin; they say he holds one-half of the estates about us—what is the English for it?—ah, yes, in pawn.

"As yet his salon is neutral ground, where one can feast, and fence with one's natural foes. But, *parbleu*, some day the buttons will drop from our foils, and then, then—" monsieur lifted his eyes and shoulders in significant conclusion of his sentence, as we rose from the table to prepare for the festivity of the night.

I found a handsome evening dress, laced and trimmed in the latest fashion, laid out for me in my room, and a lackey waiting to curl and perfume my hair, and adjust the ruffles and fripperies to which I was not used. How my host had procured all these

things to fit me I do not know, but in truth he seemed to hold some magic spell which commanded all that he wished.

But I must confess that when I was tricked out in this new garb, which was of rich green enlivened with touches of gold broidery, and waistcoat of crimson velvet, and when I viewed myself in the great mirror that covered one-half of the wall of my dressing-room, I would have been glad if Giles and Polly could have seen me. For they were wont to laugh at my sober raiment, and indeed I had sometimes thought sadly of late that it was this dulness in my looks and dress that had lost me what I most had craved, for Giles always wore the gay garb and mien that take a maiden's eye. But if Polly had seen me to-night, she could have found no fault with me. I scarcely knew myself in the gay gallant who confronted me in the gilt-framed mirror, for having lost something of my color and sturdiness during my sickness, there was a pallor about me that befitted the Paris *élégant*, into which I had been transformed.

Perhaps it was the dizziness caused by my new splendor that confused me, but when I left my room to rejoin my host I found myself bewildered amid the hotel corridors. I turned to the right, then to the left, and to the right again, seeing no one to guide me until suddenly I heard voices through an open door. I stepped forward, intending to knock and ask direction from those within, when I was struck dumb and motionless where I stood by an oath, so fierce, so deadly in its fury and passion, that it chilled the blood in my veins, and from my place of vantage I saw the old man I had met in the morning, his hand clutching Monsieur de Montfort's shoulder while he hissed out, in trembling accents:

"You have the money now, monsieur. What it has cost me to bring it to you I will not say, but you have the money, and with it my curse, the deadliest curse man can invoke on man."

"Bah, bah!" was the contemptuous reply. "What care I for your curses, you old fool? Hands off, I say, hands off, or I will call my servants to kick you from the house like the dog you are!"

"Aye, dog, indeed," was the tremulous answer, "but, remember, Monsieur de Montfort, remember that it is the dog driven mad that bites—and—kills!"

And like one half-blind he staggered from the room, muttering and shaking, while I was careful to fall back into the shadow of the cross corridor as he passed, for indeed I felt these were scenes upon which it was not meet for a guest to intrude.

Then happily as I beat my hasty retreat, I stumbled upon a staircase which I remembered, and thus made my way back to the apartment in which we had dined, where my host in a few moments rejoined me. He was in an elegant evening costume, a touch of silver enlivening the black which he wore in memory of his half-brother, the late Count. He greeted me gaily, casting an approving glance on my dress.

"Ah, Louis has done well with you, Monsieur Carroll. The young American will throw all our Paris gallants in the shade to-night. A trifle too pale, perhaps; you should have let your valet touch your cheek with a bit of rouge. But perhaps it was better to leave you with the delicacy that young ladies find interesting. Come, then, the fiacre is at the door. We will be off, *mon ami*, for it grows late."

And as we entered the fiacre and were borne away through the dimly-lit streets, that I knew were seething with passion and pain and misery such as had found voice in the curse that was still echoing in my ear, I longed for the starlit peace of my own forests, and wondered what manner of world was this Paris, where people could dance and sing and dine with the rumble of a volcano under their feet, and its smoke-cloud darkening above their heads.

The house to which we went was, Monsieur de Montfort assured me, one of the stateliest in Paris, though the front it turned to the street was in frowning gloom as if to prevent the rabble from seeing its splendors. But when we drove through the *porte-cochère* we found the inner court ablaze with lights. We passed up a broad staircase, gay with potted plants and evergreens, into the salon, or rather suite of salons, for there seemed

half a score of them connected with arches draped with curtains of velvet and lace.

Such glitter and splendor I had never seen. Everywhere there were tapestries and paintings and statues of marble and bronze. Great clusters of waxen tapers shed soft light upon the polished floors, the many mirrors, that flung back their rays. But all this was only the setting for the gay crowds that filled the spacious rooms. The wonderful gowns and jewels and towering head dresses I can not describe, for my young eyes were dazzled with their splendor. But the men I could see more distinctly. All classes and ages seemed to be mingled here; there were soldiers in glittering uniform, diplomats in foreign dress, courtiers in all their finery; here and there, even, the ecclesiastical purple of some high dignitary, and civilians in the plainer evening dress which was just beginning to come into vogue. Monsieur de Montfort seemed perfectly at home in this glittering assemblage. He moved from one group to another exchanging gay greetings, and introducing me everywhere as his late brother's young American kinsman, Carroll Dare.

And whether it was my host's prestige, or the name of American, or my own new finery, I can not say, but I was shown such courtesy and favor on all sides that I was soon at my ease, as completely as if I were in my godfather's manor or the drawing-room of Sefton Hall. Seeing this, Monsieur de Montfort left me to take care of myself among the younger men, one of whom, especially, a Monsieur Dumont, I found very agreeable. He told me that his father, a naval officer, had come to America with the fleet of de Rochambeau, which at once warmed my heart.

I could see at once that he was an ardent loyalist, and while I was listening with sympathy to what he said, we were interrupted by the tap of a fan upon his shoulder.

"*Tais toi,*" commanded a silvery voice, "dost not know, stupid Bertrand, that this monsieur is a king-hating American?" I looked up in astonishment at the remembered voice. For it was my pretty guide of the morning who spoke—Mademoiselle Camille herself, but oh, how changed from the veiled mourner!

Now she was all in a splendor of shimmering white, beautiful to look at, with white roses on her breast and in her hair. She shot a glance at me half-roguish, half-inquiring.

"So, monsieur, the fates decree that we meet again."

"Ah," said Monsieur Dumont in surprise, "then you have met my sister, Monsieur Dare?"

"By accident only, Bertrand. I was in church this morning, and Monsieur Dare was kind enough to find a trinket I had lost and restore it to me. But it is for you I am looking now, laggard. Hélène has arrived—"

At the name my companion's face kindled with a light that I knew, and I was dropped out of his thought like a stone flung into a stream.

"Hélène!" he echoed. "I did not think she would come. Where is she now?"

"In the red salon talking to Monsieur d'Autun. So rescue her, Bertrand, or she will talk her head on a pike."

The grisly jest chilled my soul; I had yet to learn how this gay people could hold merry court even where Death was king.

"I will take charge of Monsieur Dare," added mademoiselle, sinking into a velvet fauteuil near-by, as her brother hurried off to meet his lady love. "So, Monsieur Honesty, I find you bellying the good character I gave you this morning! *Mon Dieu!* what a change! The whole salon is in a flutter over the splendor of the handsome American cavalier."

"How would you have an American appear in a lady's salon, mademoiselle? In feathers and war paint?" I asked

"Aye, rather than tricked out in false colors," she answered. "I like natural savagery—therefore I liked you this morning when you were plain and simple and honestly uncivil to me. But to-night, monsieur, to-night—I do not know whether I like you or not."

There was a coquettish gleam in her dark eyes that might well have beguiled another into soft words and flatteries. But Polly held me still too closely in thrall, Polly, whose sweet memory came back to me even more vividly with the breath of the roses

that mademoiselle wore, roses of the same hue that clambered up the porches of Manor Dare, and whispered of all that I had left in that fair home across the sea.

"In what way have I incurred mademoiselle's displeasure?" I asked quietly.

"It is worse than displeasure, monsieur," she answered petulantly. "It is—distrust."

"That I am sure I do not deserve," I replied.

My calmness seemed to nettle her; doubtless she was used to livelier speech.

"Then, monsieur, will you pray tell me what so gallant a cavalier was doing in the poor little church of Sainte Thérèse this morning, and what so simple and devout a Monsieur Honesty is doing in this gay crowd to-night?"

"I had just made my adieux to the good curé of Sainte Thérèse, to whom I owed a most kindly welcome to Paris, mademoiselle," I answered. "I stopped in the church to ask God's blessing on my journey in this strange, and so it has proved to me, perilous land. And Monsieur de Montfort, my kinsman by marriage, has added the pleasure of this evening to the many civilities he has shown me since I met him this morning."

"For the first time, monsieur?" she asked quickly.

"No. We chanced to be fellow travelers in the diligence from Rouen—though then I did not know him."

"And—you know him *now*, monsieur?" There was mingled pity and sarcasm in her tone.

"His name and face at least," I answered lightly. "Beyond these we are still strangers."

"Aye, and if you know even his name and face, monsieur, you are wise, for I have heard he can change both at will. I do not like your Monsieur de Montfort, of that I am quite sure. Look at him now," she lifted the drapery of the arch with the tip of her fan, and showed me my host standing in the embrasure of a distant window, conversing eagerly with a man in ecclesiastical dress. "That is Monsieur d'Autun to whom he is speaking, the excommunicated bishop, the man who has been



"They are a well-matched pair of knaves."

false to his God, his Church, his king! Ah, they are a well matched pair of knaves, and planning no good, I am sure."

She dropped the curtain, and turned to me with a merrier look in her eyes.

"When you were praying this morning, Monsieur Honesty, I trust you asked deliverance from the devil and all his works? For in truth he is ruling poor France just now, and it will be hard to escape his claws. You are young, very young, monsieur."

"It is a misfortune in which mademoiselle shares," I answered.

"Ah, *mon Dieu*, non; I am old, monsieur; every month since I have been sixteen has counted a year. That makes me—how much is three times twelve and sixteen, monsieur?—for I could never learn figures."

"Fifty-two," I answered.

"*Eh bien*, that is my age in truth, monsieur, fifty-two. There are some who still call me nineteen, but it is a mistake. One does not always count time by the calendar. And was I not a veritable *béguine* when you saw me this morning in that horrible black? Confess, you find me improved this evening."

"Mademoiselle needed no improvement," I answered truly, for she had been bewitching from the first.

"Ah, that is better—you Americans are quick to learn. But it was barbaric in you to refuse madame's ring."

"And why, mademoiselle?"

"Because—because—it was a grace that should have been accepted gracefully."

"Nay, mademoiselle, I would not have had her believe that I had intruded myself upon her for either grace or reward, for in truth I almost held my breath in the church lest she should know there was an unwilling witness to her grief."

"Ah, she was weeping! I saw it in her eyes," said my companion tremulously. "It is only thus she weeps, alone before God's altar. It is pitiful, monsieur, to see her proud spirit bowed so low. Ah! the cruelty, the tyranny, the cowardly insult to which she has to submit. If I were but a man—if I were but a *man*—" added the girl passionately, while her brilliant eyes grew

dim with tears that stirred me more than her words or smiles could have done, for I never could bear to see a woman weep.

"Surely neither she nor you can lack man's service, mademoiselle," I answered, "for you have all that commands his faith and love."

"Faith! Love!" she echoed bitterly. "Both are dead in this unhappy land. Look around, monsieur. Three years ago the woman you saw bowed in grief at Sainte Thérèse could rule every creature in this room with a word, nay, a glance. To-night, monsieur, to-night there is no more wretched woman in France than its—queen."

"Queen!" I echoed in amazement.

"Aye, queen, monsieur. Do you think there is another woman on earth whom Camille Dumont would call mistress? It was the hapless queen whom you saw weeping and praying before the shrine of France's sainted sovereigns this morning."

"The queen!" I repeated, in dismay at my own dulness, and then as I recalled the majestic presence that no disguise could mar, I added: "In truth I might have known."

"In truth you might, monsieur," mocked mademoiselle, with the merry gleam dancing back into her eyes, "if you had had French eyes or French wit. But being an American barbarian—"

"To whom all women are queens, mademoiselle," I said, bowing with my best grace.

"And God grant happier queens than those who wear crowns," added mademoiselle with feeling. "Howbeit, monsieur, whether from your lack of wit or grace I can not say, but you have found favor with my gracious mistress. Something in your looks, in your words, seemed to stir a tender memory in her troubled brain, until of a sudden it flashed back to her that Elinor de Montfort—that loveliest and best-loved of her ladies-in-waiting had been a Mademoiselle Dare.

"'If it be Elinor's brother—and indeed he hath the same true, fearless eyes,' said her majesty, 'he will serve me, I know.'"

"With my life," I answered impetuously, as I thought of

the queenly head I had seen bowed in grief; the beautiful eyes I had seen dim with tears.

“I take you at your word, monsieur. As an American citizen you are free from the suspicion and espionage that follows all who are known to be faithful to her majesty. You leave for Chateau de Montfort to-morrow. Will you bear a message to be guarded, even with your life, for my mistress, the queen?”

CHAPTER VI.

SIGNS AND OMENS.

"A MESSAGE for my sister?" I asked.

"No, monsieur." She paused and looked around her cautiously, but amid the gaiety of music and laughter, the dancing and talking, we were as alone as if encircled by stone walls, so apart can two be in an unheeding crowd.

And doubtless we seemed but a gay youth and maiden exchanging soft words and flatteries. Mademoiselle continued: "The message you are to bear to the Chateau de Grammont, which is two leagues from that of de Montfort. You will find the chateau itself deserted, for the count, with so many others, has had to abandon his home. He is with the *émigré* army, monsieur, or," she hesitated a little, "in its service. But if you indeed would serve my unhappy mistress, as you have said, you will go to the mill of Jules Bouchard, on the castle grounds, and say to him that Mademoiselle Dumont asks, 'If he grinds at night.' And when he answers, 'At the baker's word,' you will give him this."

Again she flung a cautious glance around, toying and coquetting with her fan, as if she were whispering the soft nothings that are intended for only one ear.

Then with a deft movement she loosened a gold chain that circled her neck, and from the roses on her breast where it had hung hidden there dropped a ring—that as if by accident rolled on the floor to my feet! I picked it up and would have returned it to her.

"Keep it, monsieur," she said. "That is the message you are to give Jules Bouchard, the miller of Pont Neuf—"

"This, mademoiselle?" I said, staring at the trinket, which to my eyes seemed rather an indifferent thing, having neither jewel nor luster upon it—only some heavily wrought design beaten upon the dull gold.

"Aye, that, monsieur. It bears a meaning which neither you nor I may read, but which you are to guard, as you promised, with your life."

I half-doubted that she was mocking me, but the dark eyes were grave and earnest now. Yet with the dancing and music and merriment all about us, I found it hard to believe there was any serious import in a charge given thus lightly.

Still as I had pledged my service to the royal lady of Sainte Thérèse, it should surely be given loyally.

"I will keep my word, mademoiselle," I answered.

"Hide the ring—quick, monsieur; let no one see, hear of it—or all that is at stake will be lost. Oh, monsieur, remember, it is not only the unhappy queen, but the sorrowing woman who trusts you. She feels that you were sent to Sainte Thérèse in answer to her tearful prayers for help, for safety, for guidance in her darkened way—you, the brother of her beloved friend, the brave, simple-minded, honest young stranger, who came to her with her rosary in hand, as an omen of his good faith. So hath all these thoughts worked upon the queen's mind, monsieur, that Bertrand and I have been at our wits' end until we could find and follow you here. And in truth for a moment when I saw you again, tricked up in such new guise, my heart failed me, Monsieur Honesty. But I soon found the coat could not change you, the charming American savage in all his simplicity was beneath it still. Shall I tell you what my woman's eyes have read, Monsieur Honesty? Your head you may lose in France—indeed, as I warned you this morning—but for your heart there is no danger. That you have left a thousand leagues across the sea."

The sudden fire in my face told her she had indeed probed my deepest feelings.

"Tell me about her," continued mademoiselle, with winsome

sympathy. "She is young, she is lovely—that goes without saying, and she loves you with all her little savage heart, and you will go back and be happy with her in a paradise where no serpent has yet come."

"There, mademoiselle, you are wrong," I said, striving to answer her lightly. "For we know that the angel with the flaming sword guards that paradise still."

"Not from men like you," she said. "Do not fear; he will bow and let you pass. But come, monsieur, we must join the others, or some wiseacre will say I am at mischief. The devil is always in the corners, as the good nuns used to say when I was a little girl, and so they made us play in rings. You will remember the message to Jules Bouchard?"

"Surely, mademoiselle—it is brief enough for even my dull wit."

"And the ring—keep it hidden in your breast, monsieur. Let no one see it, as you value the queen's safety, freedom, nay, God knows, may be, even her life."

"I come of an honest race, mademoiselle," I answered simply. "Many things have we borne—poverty, exile, tortures, and death, in the five hundred years of which we hold record, but never hath a Dare been known to betray a trust."

"Ah, doth *noblesse oblige* even in the American wilderness?" she asked gaily. "It is enough, monsieur. What a happy little savage she is who can claim fealty like yours."

We stepped forward and found the two lovers and several more young people standing in a group just beyond us—on guard, indeed, at mademoiselle's behest, for they were all friends to her and the cause for which she sought my aid, and these were times when even the young learned craft and subtlety.

"Bertrand, Hélène, Marie," said mademoiselle blithely, "you should hear Monsieur Dare tell of that charming country of his across the sea—all is so free, so glad, no rigors of etiquette, no stupid *convénances*, no frowning chaperons. Let us all emigrate to-morrow and be done with this wicked old France forever."

"Ah, but the wildness of it," said Mademoiselle H  l  ne with a shudder. She was a pretty little doll of a woman, all frilled and puffed out of natural shape and grace, and what Monsieur Dumont could see in her to devour so with his eyes I could not tell. "Think of living in a forest where there are no shops, no modistes, no coiffures."

"Only red Indians waiting to tear off scalp and all," added mademoiselle mischievously. "But at least one is left with a head, which since Dr. Guillotine has set the new fashion, is more than we can be quite sure of here."

And every one laughed gaily as if she had made the merriest jest in the world, so lightly could these strange people toss away the grisliest thoughts. And while I stood among mademoiselle's friends, striving to show them we were not the barbarians they believed us, Monsieur de Montfort drew near and added in his own courteous way many pleasant things of my country and people which from me would have seemed but unmannerly boasting.

Then telling the gay company that I was as yet barely recovered from serious illness, he took me away with him, I being indeed glad to go, for I had seen enough of this glittering mockery of joy, which seemed to me like the flames that play upon foul waters, where all beneath is decay and death.

As we were to start next day for Picardy where, as Monsieur de Montfort assured me, the mails were uncertain, he advised me to take advantage of my brief stay in Paris to send letters home, kindly providing me with writing materials in my room. I had hesitated hitherto to notify my mother of the misfortunes that had befallen me, knowing that the tidings would only add to her grief and fears, but now that all things seemed to be going well with me again, I was glad of the opportunity to send her a long letter.

And as in the silence of the night, I sat writing to the dear ones I had left so far away, and my thoughts were borne across the wide leagues of ocean between me and all that I loved on earth, I am not ashamed to say that the paper before me was

more than once blurred by the mists that gathered in my eyes as I wrote loving and tender messages to all. And then, in fancy (for I was but a lad in those days, weary and sick for home), I followed the letter's course. I knew the shouts of joy with which my young brothers would greet my familiar hand, when the mail should be delivered to them at my own wharf. I pictured the wild race home, calling out the good news to all they met, for there were none within fifty miles of Manor Dare who did not call its master friend. I knew how my mother would be watching on the pillared porch, and how her sweet face would flush and pale and flush again with the mingled joy and pain of my news. And good Father Jorin would read the letter and speak, as ever, words of counsel and cheer, and Giles would come and listen; for, despite all things, I knew he had a brother's love for me. And Polly—perhaps Polly would come dancing up the box-bordered path, swinging her pink sunbonnet, to hear of her old playfellow's perils. And as I leaned forward on the table, my hands on my eyes, it seemed to me that I could smell the late roses that wreathed the portico, and hear the song of the oriole whose nest swung from the great oak-tree that shaded the west gable of Manor Dare.

I closed and sealed my long letter, and put it in the mail pouch which Monsieur de Montfort assured me would be sent in the morning—little guessing that my courteous host would be the only reader of those loving lines.

And doubtless it was this long letter and the pictures it set before me that brought so vivid a dream to me when at last I sought my pillow, and sank into a troubled sleep.

It seemed to me that I stood on the threshold of my own home again, but the dimness of twilight rested on everything; the roses were scattered, the song of the oriole hushed, and there were none to meet or to greet me. A strange, chilling sense of loneliness seemed to be upon me. It was as if this home that was my birthright and inheritance knew me no more. I pushed open the heavy door and entered the wide hall, and still I saw no one, only old Bevis, who lay couched on my bearskin,



"Unannounced, I entered."

and who lifted his head and howled as I hurried by to the west parlor, where my mother always sat at eventide, saying her rosary as she watched the sun go down over the hill where my father lay at rest. But she was not there, and led by the sound of many voices, I kept on to the great dining-room that we used only when there was a throng of guests.

Unannounced, I entered. The wide room was filled with my kinsmen and neighbors, the Seftons, Brents, Digges, Wexhams; the great mahogany table was loaded with cold meats and wines and pastries, and my brother sat at the head, in the master's place.

"Has no one a word of welcome for me?" I asked, stepping forward.

And all started up in terror, staring at me as if I were a stranger. Only Polly turned shining eyes on me and cried out:

"Carroll, Carroll, have you come back that I may tell you that I love you, that I have always loved you, that I will be yours only, forever, in life and in death?"

And with the words still ringing in my ears, I awoke to find the sun shining in my face and Monsieur de Montfort's valet at my bedside, telling me that within an hour we would start for Picardy.

I could almost have throttled the smirking rogue for thus breaking in upon a dream that set my heart a-flutter with such joy as made the waking doubly bitter. And yet so clear had the cry come to me that its music kept singing in my heart all day, mocking me with its sweetness.

"I love you, Carroll. I have always loved you, I will be yours only, forever, in life and in death."

And in the melody of these words I forgot the strange, chilling loneliness of my dream. It was not until afterward that I recalled it as a prophecy or perhaps a warning of the peril that would soon nearly make Carroll Dare a ghostly wanderer, even in the home of his love.

I dismissed Louis, telling him I would not need his assistance this morning. Indeed, I found the valet very much in my

way, especially as I remembered that the ring entrusted to my care was still in the pocket of my gay evening waistcoat.

For a moment I trembled lest, after the curious habit of his kind, Louis had been searching my clothes while I still slept, but in a moment I was reassured, for I found the ring quite safe.

Looked at by daylight I could see the trinket was of rare and curious workmanship, wrought cunningly with some heraldic device which I could not decipher. I fastened it securely in the silken string of the scapular I carried night and day, and then dressing hurriedly in the plain clothes I had worn on my arrival in Paris, I went down-stairs to the breakfast-room.

Monsieur de Montfort soon joined me. He was in his usual gay humor, and after a very good breakfast, we took the coach for the first stage of our journey.

Of this journey I could write much, but that I must hurry on to events of greater interest that followed. Suffice to say that we traveled for nearly three days very comfortably, for my companion held the golden wand which can command the good things of life. He spared nothing that could contribute to our pleasure.

We stopped overnight at Compiègne, at Amiens, where the best rooms and the best wines the inns afforded were at our service; we took cross cuts to shorten our journey—in private chaise with postilions and relays of horses at our command. The country through which we passed was much the same as that which I had seen in my previous journeying; there was the same sunshine, the same gaiety, the same black shadows of want and woe and despair. As we approached the northeastern frontier, the gloom seemed to deepen, fiercer evils to menace the unhappy land. Scattered bands of soldiery, trains of wagons, and camp followers obstructed the highway.

I knew that the allied armies of Prussia and Austria were threatening the frontier, and that many of the exiled nobles of France were beneath the standards that rose, as was supposed, in sympathetic support of the royal cause. Hence I was not a

little startled when we reached Cambrai by Monsieur de Montfort's announcement.

"The king has declared war. The honor of France demands it. The imperial brother-in-law has—what is it the English call it?—bullied us long enough. Now we must break his Austrian nose for him. *Sapristi*, what a family trouble it will make! Droll, to American eyes, is it not?"

I had to confess that I could see no drollery in war, which was a very cruel thing, as we Dares had learned to our cost.

"Ah, true, very true!" said monsieur, sympathetically. "But yours was a noble, earnest struggle, which has justly won your country a place among the nations of the earth. But here, *mon ami*, we pose, we strut, we jabber, and *pouf*, all ends in smoke! Half of France is with our Austrian brother-in-law, and he knows it. But we must shake our fists in his face, nevertheless, and dare him to come on. There is no danger; it is all a droll show. And because there is no danger, monsieur, excepting, perhaps, a little fright for women and children, I say what I now do. I have received despatches from Paris which call me back at once to look after my investments there, which this war business imperils. You will continue your journey to Chateau de Montfort, which is not more than six leagues distant, and give Madame la Comtesse such protection and comfort as only her brother can. It grieves me thus to interrupt our pleasant journey, but my recall is imperative, monsieur, and perhaps, after all, I might be *de trop* at such a tender reunion." And again there was the gleam in his narrowing eyes that, despite all his courtesy, aroused the strange repulsion man ever feels for the serpent and all his crawling kind.

But I strove to express, as civilly as I could, my regrets that he had been so inconvenienced by his kindness to me, and begged him to take no further trouble. With a good horse I could easily make the rest of my journey in a few hours. Secretly I was glad of the chance that would enable me to see my sister alone, and learn from her all that she might not tell freely before her husband's brother.

So with many friendly compliments Monsieur de Montfort and I parted, he urging a purse of gold upon me, as I would need money, he said, until I could obtain remittances from home, and mapping out my way roughly on a bit of paper.

The road seemed to be straight and plain enough, and I was not a little pleased to see it passed directly by the Chateau de Grammont, whose towered gateway was given to me as one of the landmarks of my journey. Here I was told to turn and cross the bridge over the little stream, which I felt sure turned Jules Bouchard's mill. Monsieur de Montfort had so arranged with our landlord that he furnished me with a good horse, to be returned from Chateau de Montfort the following day, and it seemed to me, as I cantered off from the dim old town, into the glad open of field and forest again, that Fortune was favoring me at last.

It was a bright September afternoon, and with no misadventure I could easily make the six leagues to Chateau de Montfort before nightfall. The sky was of dazzling clearness, the air filled with the breath of the ripening grapes, the road to my sister lay unbarred before me—or so, at least, I fancied.

It had been months since I had felt the strong speed of a horse beneath me, and the familiar motion gave me a sense of freedom and power that I had not known since I touched this strange land.

So blithe was my mood that I rode recklessly, forgetting that it was not my own swift, surefooted Bess that I was spurring on to a wild gallop, when of a sudden my horse went down fetlock deep in a hole in the road, flinging me over his head like a bundle of straw. I scrambled to my feet, little the worse for the tumble, but my gay caracoling was at an end; my poor horse was crippled, as I sorely feared, forever.

I dragged him up, but he fell down again with an almost human cry of pain. For half an hour or more I struggled to ease the poor brute; then finding he was still unable to move, I determined to push on to the mill which, I thought could not be far distant now, for just beyond the point of my misadventure

the road dipped into a thickly-wooded hollow, from which came the sound of troubled waters. I hurried forward, and found myself in a very wilderness of gloom, the sunset trembling through such thick foliage as robbed it of all gladness, and gave it a murky redness like unto the hue of blood. The roadside was a tangle of vines and thickets, and there was a silence and chilliness in the place that brought a creep into my veins, albeit I was not given to idle fears.

But I was afoot and unarmed, and had learned by sore experience new lessons of discretion. So I advanced cautiously, keeping in the shadow beside the road, and stepping noiselessly, as our Indian playmates had taught us to do when tracking the wild creatures of our own forests.

Suddenly there came to me the sound of low voices not far distant, and I paused to listen.

"It is past the time," said one. "We have been waiting here an hour. I like not the job, Gaspard. It may be but a trap set for us, after all."

"Do you think an old rat like me could not smell a trap? Non, non, it is all right, my comrade. I know the man for whom I work. He is sure—sure and strong as death. The boy will come. Patience, the sun is not yet down."

"But he may have taken another road."

"Impossible. There is no other road to Chateau de Montfort. He must pass here. Courage, my chicken-heart; remember, there is not only a purse of gold in his pocket, but a heavier one waiting for each of us when our work is done. And, after all, what is it?—pouf! bang! he tumbles from his horse and all is over."

My heart gave a sudden leap, and then seemed to stand still as it flashed upon my whirling brain these villains were talking of—me.

CHAPTER VII.

PLOTS AND PERILS.

FOR a moment I stood breathless, bewildered, as one stunned by a lightning flash, so horrible was the revelation forced upon my quickened brain. That these villains were waiting for me I could not doubt. The purse of gold I carried, the road I must perforce take, the very hour of my passing, all pointed me out as the intended victim of their murderous assault. But this was to be no mere highway robbery, as the speaker's other words proved.

"I know the man for whom I work. He is sure and strong as death—another purse for each of us when our work is done—"

There was some hellish plot against me. I had been sent coldly and deliberately into this death trap.

And even to my slow wits, the devilish plotters stood revealed. It could be but one—the man against whom I had been forewarned not only by my godfather's friend, but by every subtle instinct of body and soul since first we had met as strangers in the Rouen diligence— Jacques de Montfort.

This indeed I saw, but the why and wherefore of his cursed treachery to me I could not then imagine. I stood, as I say, so stunned and bewildered by its blackness, that for the moment all thought of my own peril was lost. Then, as the first shock of horror passed, all the hot blood of the Dares within me began to boil. I looked around me for some weapon of defense, but not a stick was in sight; the fagot-pickers had cleared the ground of every twig. There were only the rough half-buried stones of a ruined wall. I picked up two of the weightiest I could handle, and as I did so my thoughts (so strange a thing

is fancy) sped back from this gloomy wood darkened by the shadows of danger and death, to the shores of my own Potomac, where we had held a gay hurling match last Whitsuntide, and I seemed to hear Polly's silvery sweet "Bravo!" rise above the heartier shouts aroused when my stone, taking a mighty sweep through the sunlit air, landed on Marshall's Island in mid-stream.

And my heart grew warm and my hand steady, and my brain and eye clear, as with my forest weapons in my hold I crept softly forward through the friendly shadows.

The villains were but a few paces from me, crouching amid the tangled vines and undergrowth, carbines in hand. Keen-eyed and eared as they doubtless were, they had not my Indian training. Ere they caught the sound of a footfall, the crack of a twig, my first stone crashed down upon him the other called Gaspard, felling him to the ground, and before he could rise, a second thundered through the breaking boughs upon his comrade, who, being younger and sturdier, staggered to his feet with a howl of pain and terror, and fled in wild fear from this mysterious attack. I sprang forward, caught up the carbine which he had dropped in his fright, and stood armed for battle now.

But the old man lay at my feet, cursing and moaning helplessly.

"You have killed me, you devil," he gasped.

"It is God's justice if I have," I answered fiercely, "for you watched here to kill me."

"You!" he whispered hoarsely, his eyes rolling up at me wildly. "Not you, not you—"

"Aye, it was I—I, you murderous villain," and then (God forgive me, for my blood was aboil with the thought of the trap that had been set for me) I caught him by the throat with a grip that made his eyes start. "Who was it set you on me? Tell me, or I will choke the life out of you as I would that of the dog whose fangs were in me. Who was it? Speak quick!" And I loosened my hold and gave him breath.

"Mercy, monsieur, mercy, and I will tell you all. We—we—were set here—to—to watch—" I could almost pity the wretch when I saw him struggling so painfully for speech—"to watch for one who was to come past at sunset mounted on a chestnut horse. Not you, monsieur, as God is my witness—not you."

"Aye, it was I—I. By God's mercy, my horse lies crippled on the road above. Again I ask who it was set you to murder me? Speak, or I throttle you again."

"Mercy, monsieur, mercy, mercy! It was Jacques de Montfort, he of the double face, who is peasant and noble, aye, and devil—all in one. It was he, monsieur."

"Jacques de Montfort told you to watch for me here, and murder me as I passed?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"And why?" I asked sternly.

"That I know not, monsieur—except that is his way. It was to be twenty louis apiece for Pierrot and myself, when—when the work was done. *Sapristi!* He will have the crows pecking my eyes out in another week now. Never have I failed him before."

"Before! then this is not the first time you have been his paid murderer?" And my thought leaped with an icy thrill of fear to Elinor and her child, who stood between this demon de Montfort and his father's title and inheritance. "Who was it? When? Where?" And as in my fear and rage I caught the shrinking wretch before me he shrieked despairingly.

"Mercy, mercy, monsieur, and I will confess all, all, if you will spare me, if you will swear—that you will not—kill me—when, when I have done."

"I swear it," I answered, for at that moment it seemed to me I would have given my soul itself to hear what this livid, shaking wretch had to tell. "You are safe from me if you speak the truth."

"It was the count, monsieur," he gasped. "The Count Armand—his brother—I shot at Monsieur Jacques' bidding."

"Good God!" I cried, and my whole being reeled at the horror and blackness of this crime.

"The countess," I asked, and it was hard to force the question through my faltering lips. "The countess and—and her child? Have you or the devil you serve wrought harm to them?"

"No, monsieur," he gasped. "No, no, no. There is no—no fear for her—Monsieur Jacques would marry her, they say, and be lord of all his brother has left."

Marry her! Marry our Elinor! The White Rose of Manor Dare! And she and her child were in this demon's power, and there were no laws of Church or State now in this wretched land to withstand his will. The breath that I had held to catch this accursed answer came through my set teeth with a hiss, and the strength of ten men seemed to enter my soul. "I will strike her dead first!" I cried with an oath that I trust God forgave, for it was indeed a human cry to His almighty justice. And forgetful of danger, of darkness, of all things but Elinor's sore need of a brother's help and guidance against this devil who mayhap had already gained mastery of her, I sprang across the wretched carcass at my feet, dashed through vines and underbrush to the open road, and sped wildly on the way that I believed would lead me to my sister's side.

For the moment I was mad; mad with the horror and fear of this new danger which seemed to me far worse than death. Ah, I knew the specious part this demon de Montfort could play, the anxious care he might show for her welfare and safety, the art with which he could work upon her fears for her child! And as I hurried on through the deepening shadows I began to realize that under a friendly mask Jacques de Montfort's evil eye had been on me ever since I touched this wretched land, his devilish power put forth to bewilder and betray me. Even now, now with his hired murderer's words ringing in my ear, any charge I should make against him would be dismissed as the lie of a terrified ruffian, the vagary of a disordered brain, for had not all Paris witnessed his kindness, his courtesy, his brotherly care for me? And as my mind cleared somewhat of its first fury,

reason and prudence resumed their mastery, and I began to wonder if I were indeed making this mad race for Chateau de Montfort. Would he who could set so cruel a death-trap for me be likely to guide me aright?

I slackened my speed and looked around me. My road had led upward, and on the hill top before me rose the frowning wall and square towers of the Chateau de Grammont—marking, as I had been told, the point where I was to turn and cross the bridge over the little stream. A stately pile was this old chateau, with arches and pillars and buttresses that belonged to the days when men built for strength and not for beauty, and though the wilderness was now pressing to its gates, I could see that behind them all was a fair pleasaunce smoothed into lawns and gardens and grassy terraces, where fountains still played, and flowers bloomed, although over all lay the stillness and shadow of the tomb. But of all this I took short notice, so startled was I by the sudden presence that confronted me. A tall man in a long riding-coat slipped out from the shadows of the gateway.

"You are late, Francois!" he said, and then as he saw me more clearly he recoiled a step or two. "Pardon, monsieur, I mistook you for a friend," he added hurriedly.

"Which is no offense, sir, surely," I answered. "May I take advantage of our meeting to ask friendly guidance on a road wherein I fear I have been misdirected? Is this Chateau de Grammont?"

"It is, monsieur," he replied.

"And does the road to the right lead to that of de Montfort?"

"Followed for a matter of two leagues it does, monsieur."

"And if I may trouble you with one more question, does the road pass within reach of the mill of Jules Bouchard?"

At this my companion started, and his tone changed as he repeated: "The mill of Jules Bouchard—has monsieur business there?"

"Yes," I answered. "That is if it will not lead me too far from my road to Chateau de Montfort. That I would reach with all possible speed."

"You are but a short distance from the mill now, monsieur," he said, "but the path is steep and dangerous in this darkness. I will be pleased to guide you if you wish to go."

I thanked him, I must confess with a secret regret that I had dropped my carbine in the excitement of my haste and passion. Courteous as was this offer, I had grown suspicious of French politeness, and would have preferred some sturdier reliance than pleasant words.

But as I did not know what urgent service to my sister would keep me at Chateau de Montfort, I felt it would be wisest to fulfil the mission I had rashly assumed as quickly as I could. So I accepted my companion's guidance, keeping a keen eye on him, as he preceded me through the shadows.

"From his accent, monsieur is a stranger in France?" asked my guide pleasantly.

"Yes—an American," I answered, and then, as there seemed no use in concealing the fact, I added: "I am the brother of the Comtesse de Montfort, and on my way to visit her. My horse met with a mischance on the road, so I am unluckily left to travel afoot."

"I fear monsieur will find the road dark and dangerous," said my guide.

"That I have already proved," I answered grimly. "I had a bout with two ruffians in the gorge below, and I think gave them cause to bewail our meeting. I must keep on to my sister to-night, let it cost what it will."

"Good!" said my companion with a laugh. "I like your motto, monsieur. *Coûte qui coûte*. It is the only watchword that wins. There is the mill now," and he pointed to a light glimmering below us. "It is not far, as you see, but step carefully, for the road is rough."

In truth it was, being no road at all, but a zigzag stair cut in the side of the hill that went down sharply to the bank of the little stream fretting below.

I thought if treachery were in my guide's mind, this was surely the place for it, but from the first his tone and manner

had reassured me. All my life have I trusted to these subtle instincts and warnings, which never have played me false—and I have been told such intuition is Heaven's gift to simple men who live in childlike faith in God and obedience to His laws. When we reached the ground below where the mill jutted out into the stream that came foaming and dashing from the dam, my guide knocked at the cottage door, which was opened by an old woman, who thrust a flaring candle forward to see the intruder, and then recoiled with a cry of alarm.

"Again," she said, "Again? I thought thou wert gone."

"*Tais toi*, my good Annette," he said, cheerily. "Here is a stranger who has business with Jules Bouchard, the miller."

"*Misericorde*," gasped the old woman, and I advanced into the room. She stared from one to the other visitor in trembling terror. My guide closed the door, slipping a heavy bolt into place, while Annette put her candle on the table and sank back shivering in a corner. The room was low and narrow, but a stone arch led into the mill beyond, where all was wide and black and cold. It was not a pleasant place with the candle flaring in the dimness, and the old woman trembling in alarm.

"*Eh bien*, monsieur," said my guide, and dropping the muffling riding-coat he wore he showed himself a handsome man of about thirty, whose keen, dark eyes searched my face with a half stern, half humorous gaze. "Let us to business, I am Jules Bouchard the miller, at your command."

I stared at him incredulously, for if ever "noble" was written on a man's face and figure it was on his.

"You jest with me, monsieur," I said, "and pardon me if I add that I have neither time nor taste for folly. My message is to Jules Bouchard, the miller, and not finding him it must go unsaid."

"Let Annette be my witness," said my companion, good-humoredly. "Old woman, am I not Jules Bouchard?"

"I will say nothing, nothing, nothing," answered Annette, putting her hands before her face, and rocking to and fro despairingly.



"An old woman thrust a flaming candle forward."

"Then monsieur must see me in my miller's dress," said my companion.

"No, no, no!" interrupted the old woman, springing up excitedly. "Never again. It is tied to a stone and sunk deep—deep in the stream without."

"Ah, too wise Annette," and the so-called Jules Bouchard shrugged his shapely shoulders. "Then, monsieur, I can only pledge you my honest word that six hours ago Jules Bouchard the miller, and I were one. His dusty coat it seems has vanished, but he who wore it remains to hear your message and answer either by word of mouth or—with this!" and he threw his sword upon the table. "I wear another that will be at your service, monsieur, for we are man to man here, either as friends or foes."

There was so much of the gallant gentleman in this bold defiance that I could not doubt his word.

"My message, then, from Mademoiselle Dumont to the miller, Jules Bouchard, is this, 'Does he grind at night?'"

"Aye," he answered quickly. "At the baker's word."

"Then this is yours, monsieur," and I drew the ring from my breast, snapped the string that held it, and gave it to him.

He took it and pressed it to his lips, his face alight with joy.

"It is what the miller, Jules Bouchard, has been awaiting, monsieur, this that Raoul de Grammont takes from you, as the most precious trust you could bring. Henceforth we are friends, comrades, brothers until death." And after the French fashion, he put his arm around me and clasped me in an embrace to which I doubtless submitted with rather an ill grace, for in my own land men were not given to such demonstration, a sturdy hand-clasp being, as I think, enough for even the closest friends.

"And now, monsieur, my trust being thus happily fulfilled, I will keep on my way to Chateau de Montfort—where my sister is in sore need of me," I said.

"Nay, you shall not brave the road alone," my new friend answered quickly. "I will go with you—as indeed my way lies in

that direction. But first, monsieur, will you explain to me how you, a stranger, an American, have been honored with her majesty's confidence and trust?"

I told him of my chance meeting in Sainte Thérèse, and that my sister had been favored by the queen's friendship, and then, as he questioned me further, I so warmed up to his sympathetic interest that he drew from me all my misadventures since I had landed in France, and the deadly treachery of the man who had played the part of friend to me.

The Sieur de Grammont (for it was indeed he who had been masquerading for months on his own estate as the miller, Jules Bouchard) listened to me with breathless interest.

"You said naught to de Montfort of the trust of her majesty?" he asked eagerly.

"No, monsieur. I was pledged to secrecy, but even had it been otherwise, some instinct warned me against the villain even in his friendliest moods."

De Grammont grasped my hand warmly.

"*Mon ami*, you are wise, prudent beyond your years and your time. A Frenchman of your age would have gabbled of such an adventure to all who would listen to him. But my belle Camille knows where and when to trust. We are betrothed, monsieur, though God only knows when Raoul de Grammont can offer safe home and shelter to a wife. And Camille will never leave her royal mistress in her present perils, surrounded by spies and enemies as she is. No faithful servant should desert her now—I would not ask it. But," and the speaker's eyes kindled, "together we hope to serve and to save her. As for what you tell me of Jacques de Montfort—I must confess it startles me beyond words. The de Montforts and de Grammonts have been friends and neighbors for generations, and though indeed of late years both families have found the atmosphere of courts and cities more congenial than that of these distant estates, I find it hard to believe that one who bears so noble a name can be the base and treacherous villain you have found him. True," de Grammont added, "there is an ignoble strain in his blood. The late count's

father married the second time a low-born woman—but doubtless you know the story?”

I told him I had heard some hints of this, but indeed knew little of my brother-in-law's family, having been such a mere boy when Count Armand came to Manor Dare for his bride, that even my sister seemed only a beautiful memory to me.

“Beautiful indeed,” said *Sieur de Grammont*. “The countess has buried herself in a widow's seclusion for the past year, but I saw her when a bride at the court of Versailles, and she was a vision of grace and loveliness that I can never forget. And Armand de Montfort was one of the noblest of men. Great heaven, *monsieur*—if Jacques de Montfort had aught to do with his taking off there is no name that I can give to the blackness and foulness of such a crime, for the count had been more than brother, friend, aye, even than father to him. The old count, who married Jacques' peasant mother, never acknowledged either her or her child, until he lay on his deathbed, when, frightened by the terrors of judgment and hell, he bade his heir do them justice. And this Armand did, in generous, soldier fashion, striving to lift them to his own level, and sharing his fortune freely with them. For the mother he could do little. She was of a wild mountain race, and would not leave her own people, but the son, who was some three years his junior, he gave a brother's place in his home and heart. And I have always heard that Jacques was clever and keen-witted beyond all his race, which has counted generations of brave knights and soldiers who have served their kings stoutly with brave hearts and strong arms, rather than wise heads. More than this I do not know, but with such black suspicion of him in your heart, *monsieur*, you will do only right to hurry to Chateau de Montfort, for these are times when brother turns against brother, and friend against friend. We will set out at once, for my way lies close to the chateau, so that I can guide you to its gates. Cheer up, old woman,” he said, turning to Annette, who still sat crooning and muttering in the corner. “All is safe yet, you see. Jules Bouchard is lost

in his own mill stream, and I am going—going to win safety and honor and happiness, Annette.”

“Ah, *mon Dieu, mon Dieu*,” moaned the old woman. “I dreamed last night that the mill-stream was running blood.”

“Tut, tut!” the speaker patted the withered cheek tenderly. “Take a cup of the tisane you used to give me when I was a boy, and you will dream such things no more. I will be back soon, Annette, to set the wedding-bells chiming, and the Grammont fountains flowing with wine. And you shall wear a silken gown and lace-trimmed lappets in your cap, and rule Chateau de Grammont from roof to ground. ’Tis only of this you must dream, Annette, until your nursling returns. God keep you until then, truest and oldest of friends.” And so saying, nobleman as he was, he bent and kissed the old woman’s cheek, and then flinging on his riding-coat again opened the cottage door and together we went forth into the night.

CHAPTER VIII.

AT THE PONT NEUF.

"Poor Annette," said de Grammont, as we turned from the door. "She is well rid of her Jules Bouchard. I think the greatest sorrow of her life has been seeing her master in the miller's dusty garb. But, *mon ami*, we must move cautiously, for to tell the truth the wolves are on Jules Bouchard's tracks. Raoul de Grammont must be out of France as speedily as possible with the signet that you have brought him to-night."

And indeed with my own troubles weighing upon me I would much have preferred risking the road to Chateau de Montfort alone, but I could not be churlish enough to refuse this gallant and courteous gentleman's company. An uneasy conviction came over me that I had become entangled in some intrigue that might further delay my own matters, for the one absorbing purpose now in my mind was to get Elinor, her child and myself, out of this accursed land as quickly as possible. I knew we were not many leagues from the frontier, and with the help of Monsieur de Montfort's gold, I thought that I could cross it in a few hours. But at present there seemed naught to do but accept Monsieur de Grammont's well-meant courtesy, so I followed him silently along the narrow path that led along the stream to the bridge, a few hundred yards below the mill. It was a heavy stone arch that carried the highway in an unbroken level from hill to hill, above the gorge, from which a flight of steep steps led upward for the convenience of those who wished to cross the stream safely, though there was a swifter if ruder passage over stepping stones below. De Grammont had his foot on the bridge stairs when he suddenly recoiled, pressing a warning hand

on my arm and drawing me back into the shadow of the arch. Scarce were we sheltered when there came the clatter of hoofs across the bridge, and half a dozen horsemen paused, just above our heads it seemed, so clearly did their converse come to our ears:

"This is the place, you say?" spoke a harsh voice, "and in truth, messieurs, as any soldier can see, it is well chosen. This bridge is the key to half Picardy. It carries the only passable road for artillery within thirty miles. A few kegs of gunpowder under either end might undo France. And you assure me that this *émigré* De Grammont has been masquerading as a miller here?"

"For the last six months, monsieur."

A fierce, whispered oath burst from de Grammont's lips. "Francois!" he muttered. "The villain, the Judas, he has sold me!"

"And in constant communication with the enemies of France?" asked the harsh voice above.

"That I can not say, monsieur."

"Yes or no, *scélérat*, or we will make short work of you as a spy for the letters we found on you to the Austrian Bodowitz. War has been declared, and your life is at stake."

"Mercy, messieurs, I was but doing my master's bidding," was the terrified answer.

"That we know—it is your master of whom we question you—reply truthfully, and you yourself shall go free. You have been carrying letters like this that we have seized upon you, constantly?"

"Every week, monsieur."

"And bringing back other despatches in return?"

"Yes, monsieur," was the trembling reply.

"The grain, of which this letter speaks, which your master holds in store until needed, what is it?"

"Monsieur!" cried the wretch despairingly.

"Answer if you love your life," was the stern command.

"It—it—is gunpowder, monsieur," faltered the traitor,

tremulously, and there came another fierce whispered curse from the man at my side.

"It is enough—you can let your prisoner go free, my men. And now for this daring miller, who holds gunpowder instead of grain beside the Pont Neuf, and sends weekly despatches to the Austrian Bodowitz. He can not be far, for this valet of his was to meet him at the mill to-night."

Then from our hiding-place in the heaviest shadows of the arch below we could hear the horsemen dismount and scatter along the bank above to inspect the steep descent to the gorge and stream.

"A wild, villainous place," said one.

"Must one tumble or jump it?" asked another, peering forward, doubtfully.

"Nay, here are steps," discovered a third, "though into what sort of a stew they lead, only the devil knows."

De Grammont was breathing shortly, like a stag at bay. For my own part, though my cooler American wits recognized ruefully the direful straits into which I had unwittingly ventured, the olden knightly spirit of the Dares was now athrill within me. Comrade though he had been for only the last hour, I was ready with heart and hand to defend this hunted man.

Let his crime against the State be what it might, I felt it had been prompted by some madness of loyalty or love. For I knew that thousands of the noblest sons of France were swelling the foreign armies, threatening her frontiers, that they might restore strength and power to their humbled sovereigns, and lift again the "lily banner" now trailing in the dust.

De Grammont had loosened his riding-coat, and slipped a pair of pistols from hidden pockets beneath. He put one in my hand.

"You may need it, but not yet," he whispered. "It would be madness—yet."

Two of the men from above came stumbling down the steps as he spoke. I could have picked them both off as readily as pigeons at a shooting-match, but, as de Grammont said, it would

be madness to brave the odds against us now. Breathless with suspense we waited while the men blundered past our hiding-place, stumbling and cursing and hurrying on to the mill.

In a moment they had surrounded it, and were pounding and shaking the doors, while they shouted for admittance.

"Poor Annette," whispered de Grammont, and there was almost a sob in his voice. "My poor old Annette!"

Still we dared not move, for the horses were neighing and champing on the bank above us, and we knew that some of the men must have been left in charge. So crouching in the darkness we waited while the search went on in mill and cottage, old Annette's shrill cries and complainings reaching us most piteously.

"Messieurs, messieurs, I swear to you he is gone. Jules Bouchard is gone, I know not where—"

"Let them look out where they set a light," muttered my companion, grimly, "for my miller's meal makes deadly porridge."

And, indeed, a shout, half of triumph, half of warning from the mill soon showed that this fact had been discovered, and the search went on more fiercely, up and down the creek and over the bridge again and on to Chateau de Grammont, and the village beyond. But our hope that it would turn from stream and bridge long enough for us to escape across the stepping-stones to the opposite shore was in vain, for guards were stationed at bridge and mill, and the whole country seemed roused with shout and cries, and the flare of torches through the night.

My own thoughts were none of the most agreeable, as I crouched like a hunted fox in the darkness, for as the hours went on the chill of the damp hollow on which we stood struck into my blood, cooling its ardor, and leaving me to face the situation with grim philosophy.

Here was I, Carroll Dare, who cared not whether this land of France were governed by monarchs or minions, whose one wish was to be quit of its tumults and turbulence with all possible speed, here was I in hiding with a hunted man who had incurred

the penalty of its laws, and meshed unwittingly in some political tangle that might cost me my liberty and perhaps my head.

And all this with the sister whom I had come here to serve within two leagues of me, and in sore need of my help and protection. As the darkness began to lift I could bear it no longer.

"Monsieur, I have a plan," I said. "I will make a break across the stream and draw the guards off in pursuit. We are near of a size. Give me your riding-coat and hat. Even if I am captured they can find nothing against me. For you, as I judge, it is a matter of life and death."

"Aye, of more than my own life or death, *mon ami*. The signet-ring which I am to bear to her majesty's brother, the emperor, may change the fate of France. It will undo this farce of war, which the king has been forced to declare. Monsieur, if I had been given only three days more—only three days more—"

As we stood whispering together I could see his face dimly by the growing light, and all its noble beauty seemed gone. It was gray and drawn like the face of an old man. And I thought of the royal lady weeping before the altar of Sainte Thérèse, and of her fancy that Heaven had sent me to her aid. I thought of the fair girl with the white roses on her breast in the Paris salon—whose young life I might bless or blight—and my resolve was taken.

"Change coats, monsieur," I said. "It is your only chance, for the day is breaking. I will draw off the hunt and in the confusion you can escape."

"The guards will fire, *mon ami*. You risk your life," he said.

"I am a swift runner, monsieur—and a soldier's son," I answered briefly.

"*Mon Dieu, mon Dieu*," he murmured, as if torn betwixt doubt and fear and new-born hope. "It is too much, too much."

"Think of your royal mistress, think of your betrothed wife, monsieur, and let me go before the shadows lift. Each moment

makes my venture more perilous, the guards' aim surer. I beseech you to give me your coat and let me go."

"Then, brave, true, generous friend, go," he whispered hoarsely, "and God be with you." In a moment we had changed coats; creeping noiselessly to the foot of the water-stairs, I sprang boldly to the stepping stones that made a perilous passage across the stream.

In an instant I was espied. "Halt!" came the excited challenge from above. "Halt, below there, halt, or I fire!" And as I leaped on regardless of the cry, the bullets came whistling down from the bridge, happily with uncertain aim at the form flying through the misty daybreak. I reached the low bank opposite in safety, though the shots were rattling in the waters all around me.

"*Voila*," went up the cry. "*Voila*, the villain, the traitor!" and with the hounds now fully on the scent, I sped along the stream, dropping as I went the heavy riding-coat that not only impeded my flight, but that I guessed would add to the delusion of those who should discover it.

And indeed I could find no fault with my strategy, so woe-fully well did it work. Scarce had the shout gone up that told I had broken cover, when a dozen pursuers were on my heels. And a mad race I gave them through the breaking shadows. I had not learned the long lope of the Indian runners through my own forests in vain. Escape I did not believe possible, for I knew not whither to turn or double, but at least I would hold the hunt long enough for the real quarry to make good his flight. So I sped on, along the low, sedgy banks of the stream, where the overhanging hills cast friendly shadows, and my light step scarcely bent the wet grass, while my pursuers floundered heavily behind me, sinking ankle-deep in the marshy hollows. Then swinging myself up by the branch of an overhanging tree, I scrambled to the high ground and bounded again over green slopes flushed with the glory of the dawn, and then into a forest again, wild and sweet almost as Sefton Wood on that June morning when my life had taken so strange and dark a turn.

And whether it was the freedom of the wood after my long dark hours under the arch of the bridge, or the joy of the dawning after the horror of the night, or some wild strain in my blood that exulted in the peril and madness of this chase (my mother often said that I drained a touch of Indian nature from old Nanchita, who was my nurse), a strange sense of strength and gladness possessed me, and seemed to wing my limbs as I sped on, the birds singing above me, and the dewy stretches of the wood aglow with the freshness of the morn. Never had I quite understood before the charm men found in daring death, but as I fled from the hunters armed against my life this morning, I felt like one whose veins were tingling with the warmth of new made wine.

But the end came shortly. Whether I unwittingly made a detour in the wood or my pursuers had doubled upon me from different ways, I do not know, but of a sudden three of them confronted me.

"At your service, messieurs," I said, firing my pistol into air, and in a moment I was overpowered and bound, as many have said since I well deserved to be, for my Quixotic folly.

But never have I repented of that morning's work, not even to this day when my blood is chill and my head white with the snows of age.

My captors blustered around me triumphantly, calling me villain and traitor and Austrian spy, and swearing that all would be over with me before another sunrise, and when I charged them with the lie, and told them that I was an American, and a stranger in these parts until yesterday, they laughed me to scorn, and led me off pinioned as a criminal, to their commanding officer, who was to decide my fate. And, indeed, I began to wonder uneasily if I had not pushed my strategy too far, as I gathered from the talk of my guards that I was to be held as a spy, and now that war had been declared, would receive a spy's short and swift sentence.

For the testimony against Jules Bouchard, or Raoul de Grammont as he was now known, was conclusive.

For months the mill of Pont Neuf had been in reality an outpost of the *émigré* army beyond the frontiers, and the supposed miller held himself ready for any daring service. It was all confusion and bewilderment to me this morning as I was marched between my guards through the dewy freshness of the woods, I protesting loudly against the indignity, and declaring myself to be the brother of the Comtesse de Montfort, and on my way to visit her. I explained that my horse had been crippled on the road, and that I had been set upon by highwaymen at nightfall, and not wishing to risk further misadventure in the darkness, I had taken shelter under the arches of the bridge until break of day, when, proceeding hurriedly on my journey, I had been rudely halted and fired upon without cause.

It was a lame story, doubtless, that I might have strengthened with a sturdy lie or two for my safety, but this I could never do—even though my life was at stake.

My guards were dull, stolid men, who paid little heed to what I said, but urged me on with scant civility over the bridge, unguarded now in the excitement of my capture, and along the road I had traversed the previous night, back to Chateau de Grammont, where the captain commanding this detachment had made his lodging for the night, searching it from roof to ground, and seizing all valuables and papers as forfeit to the State.

As I passed under the great stone gateway carved with the ancient crest of the de Grammonts, and up the broad avenue that led through park and pleasaunce that had for centuries been the scene of courtly gaiety and love, there came upon me an infinite pity for this brave man whose place and name I, for the moment, held at my own peril, and a saddened sympathy with this *ancien régime*—that seemed tottering to its fall.

Sturdy son as I was of the new freedom whose triumphant burst from kingly shackles was felt by every trembling throne across the sea, I could understand all that the "old rule" stood for in stately homes like this great chateau where God, king and country had been the watchword of a noble line for centuries, where loyalty bred in blood and bone for countless generations, had all

the stern strength of an ancient faith, all the passionate fervor of personal devotion.

There had been nothing of this in our new world. Struggles, ties and traditions of a far past had reached only feebly and faintly over a dividing ocean; crowns and thrones had been mere shadows cast across the sea. But here, all was different. The growth of ages seemed smitten, leaving only chaos and discord. Like the blind Samson, the nation was pulling at the pillars of the temple that was to crush it in its fall.

And Chateau de Grammont represented all that was noblest and best in the "olden order," so soon to pass away.

The quaintly-clipped hedges, the velvety grass of lawn and terrace, the moss-grown fountains and marbles, all seemed to be mellowed and made lovelier by the kindly touch of Time. I was led through great, oaken, iron-barred doors into a wide stone hall, where the battered shields and casques worn at Crécy and Poitiers still hung upon the walls, and the mighty coat of mail, borne by the great Crusader, Guilbert Boise de Grammont, stood upright with closed visor, and greaves and gauntlets in place, like some sturdy ghost from the far-off past. Here, too, were flags tattered and blood-stained, each doubtless telling its own heroic story, and framed under glass, as holy things, the miter and crozier of the great bishop who had written the de Grammont name high on the records of his time as scholar and saint.

But that which above all caught my gaze, and held it with a tender pity and sympathy unspeakable, was a picture that stood against the great stone chimney unframed and unhung, as if awaiting proper honor and place.

It was the full length portrait of a girl in all the radiance of her first bloom. The slender, graceful figure was gowned in white, there were roses on her breast and hair, and the brilliant eyes seemed to flash at me from the canvas in friendly recognition, for the pictured face was that of Raoul de Grammont's betrothed—Mademoiselle Dumont.

Le Prix the picture was conspicuously ticketed, with a date

of two years previous, and the signature of a well known Parisian artist. And I, who knew how a woman can hold and sway the heart of man, even despite himself, realized all the unintentional significance of the words.

Here, beside this abandoned hearthstone smiled its waiting sovereign; here, unthroned, uncrowned, Love stood appealing, inspiring the prize to be won by fiery heart and daring hand. And as I recalled the passionate devotion to her mistress that Mademoiselle Dumont had shown even to me, a stranger, I could well understand how de Grammont's loyalty was strengthened by his love. But I had little time to consider these things, which indeed passed before my eyes with the swiftness of a vision, as I was led the full length of the hall, and under a swinging curtain of tapestry into a spacious room with groined ceiling and mullioned windows, and bookshelves reaching high on the lofty walls. It was the library of the great churchman before mentioned, and had been guarded as the greatest treasure of the de Grammonts for well-nigh a hundred years.

It was a scene now that might justly have invoked the vengeance of Heaven. The doors of bookcases and cabinets had been ruthlessly shattered, and their contents, parchments, papers, books, the scholarly wealth of centuries, lay in wild disorder upon the floor. Dozens of empty bottles told of a night's debauch on rare old wine, rifled from the chateau cellars, and sprawling around the tables in the center of the room in their vain efforts to assume attitudes of dignity, were a half-score of men either fierce, or heavy with drink.

The captain, a thick-set, low-browed fellow, whose head was perhaps somewhat thicker, therefore steadier than the rest, greeted my captors with a grunt of approval.

"*Eh bien*, so you have him, my men. Well done! You shall have a louis apiece and a bottle of wine to drink perdition to these wolves of aristocrats that would devour us."

And the fellow, who had been pushed up from the ranks to meet the needs of a service woefully depleted by the emigration of so many noble officers, glared at me with the vindictive

triumph of the low-born tyrant drunk with new power and old wine.

"Stand out, prisoner," he said, "and answer for yourself. You are Raoul de Grammont, falsely known for the last six months as Jules Bouchard, the miller of Pont Neuf?"

"I am not, monsieur," I answered calmly. "My name is Carroll Dare, of the State of Maryland, in the United States of America. I am a stranger passing through this country on the way to my sister's home, the Chateau de Montfort, and have been seized by your men and dragged a prisoner here without cause."

The captain's eyes, red and rheumy with drink, stared at me for a moment uncomprehendingly, then he struck a shaking hand upon the table.

"Lies," he said roughly, "lies, lies, lies! We know who and what you are, Citizen Grammont," he continued, using the harsh mode of address just coming into vogue with his kind. "Liar, traitor, Austrian spy. Here are the papers to prove it—and doom you to a traitor's death!"

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE "OUBLIETTE."

It was with difficulty I held my wrath in check, for my blood boiled at the ruffian's insults, but I only answered :

"I know nothing of your papers, monsieur. I repeat what I said to your men when they seized me in the woods. I am a stranger in this country, having arrived from Paris, in company with Monsieur Jacques de Montfort, only yesterday to visit my sister, the countess. Call the servants, the neighbors, any one who knows this Jules Bouchard, for whom you mistake me, and they will bear witness that I am not the man you seek."

Something in the boldness of this challenge seemed to reach the fellow's muddled wit, for he turned sharply on my captors.

"Dolts!" he said, "have you brought me the wrong man? How do you know that this is Jules Bouchard?"

They answered, justly enough, that they had been set to watch the bridge lest the hunted man escape, and seeing me unheeding their challenge, and seemingly flying from pursuit, they had followed and seized me, believing such to be their orders.

Again the captain's bleared eyes and dulled brain seemed to study me in angry perplexity. But heavy with wine though he was, the knave was no fool.

"Jules Bouchard or not," he muttered with an oath, "this trickery is not without cause. And for the witnesses you ask—they would all forswear themselves, I well know, so have they been bred in slavish fear of those they called master and lord. But you have named Jacques de Montfort—"

"Aye, but as a villain and traitor, from whom I ask nothing," I burst forth fiercely.

"So much the worse for you then, citizen," was the harsh answer, "for it is Monsieur de Montfort who must be your witness."

"Not he, but my sister, the countess," I said eagerly. "Her chateau is not two leagues from this, monsieur. Send a message that her brother is held here a prisoner, and she will come herself to testify for me."

But the captain's heavy brow blackened with a frown. "*A bas* with your countesses and your counts, and all their cursed kind," he growled. "But Jacques, brave Jacques—we know him, do we not, *mes amis*? Jacques the wolf-cub, Jacques of the people, Jacques of the hills."

"Jacques of the devil," hiccoughed a younger man at the captain's side, and a drunken laugh went around the table that made my blood chill, as I began to realize all that I had ventured in my mad effort to save the comrade of a few brief hours. For it had never entered into my mind that any danger would follow my capture. The worst, I thought, that could befall me would be a few hours' delay. But I found myself sorely mistaken, for after a brief parley among my guards in some rude *patois* I could not understand, I was led off by two of them into a dark corridor and down a stairway, steep and crooked, that seemed to lead into the very bowels of the earth. And here I was thrust into a damp stone cell or dungeon, and left to meditate on my folly. My first thought when left alone was the mad one to free myself at any cost from the horror of this place, the like of which I had never seen or even dreamed of. So dark was it, at first, that I could not measure height or depth. All around me was a black, hideous void. But as my eyes grew used to the gloom I saw that I was in a vault, some eight or ten feet square, cut out of the solid rock. Whence the light came that enabled me to see even this much I can not say, for there was not a break in the solid walls, excepting the heavy iron-grated door, through which I had been thrust, and which was now barred and locked hopelessly. I was as helpless as if entombed alive. I had heard of these *oubliettes*, in which living men were "forgotten," and my heart grew sick with a horrible

dread, as I realized that I was here, the prisoner of drunken ruffians, whom no one would hold accountable for my fate. Vainly I struggled against the thoughts that came pressing upon me, vainly I told myself that in a few hours, when the story of my capture should be bruited abroad, the truth would be discovered and I would be set free. But who was there to speak for me? Who, but the hunted man in whose place I stood? and who could only help me by giving himself up to death? Only Raoul de Grammont, and my deadliest enemy, Jacques de Montfort! To all the rest of the world I was as lost as if I were already entombed. I could die here and none would ever know my fate.

I had had no food since the day before, and added to the sickness of soul that well nigh mastered me, I was bodily faint and weak. Besides, the cold of the night spent under the bridge had chilled my blood, still thin from my illness in Rouen. In a little while I began to shake and chatter with an ague, to which we of the river shores of Maryland have ever been prone. It came upon me now as it never had done before, turning my blood, so it seemed, into ice in my veins, clutching my vitals with the grip of death. I flung myself on the damp, noisome floor of my dungeon, feeling that this, perhaps, was the end of all, of fear, of hope, of struggle.

I tried to pray, and though my cold, trembling lips did not shape the familiar words, their music seemed to echo through the horror of darkness around me.

"Our Father, Father!" I was lisping the words at my mother's knee, her soft hand resting on my baby curls.

"Our Father, who art in heaven." I stood one of a little tearful group around a flag-draped coffin, and it was Father Jorin now who voiced the orphan's cry of love and hope.

"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done—" I could go no further; my bewildered thoughts seemed to cluster and cling around this last petition, as if it were a rock in the surging ocean.

Fiat voluntas tua. The words were graven on my father's headstone; they were painted beneath the cross that hung in my

mother's chamber; they had been the text of Father Jorin's sermon over her hero husband's bier.

For *Fiat voluntas tua* had been the Catholic patriot's last cry as he fell. It was fitting it should nerve the sinking spirit of his son now. And whether it was this indeed, or the fire of the rising fever that warmed my blood, I can not say, but the icy spell that had bound me seemed to break and the strength of manhood to come back to me.

I felt ready to face what was before me as the son of Colonel Roger Dare should. And while I was upheld by this new vigor, the trial came; voices and footsteps broke the silence around me, there was a glimmer of light in the gloom, the iron-barred door swung open, and in the glare of a lantern held aloft by one of my guards I recognized—Jacques de Montfort!

I had thought the man leagues away on his road to Paris, and the shock of seeing his evil face and narrowing eyes, after all that I had learned of him, struck me, for the moment, dumb.

He took the lantern from the guard, and held it so that the light flared full upon my face, and what he read there I do not know, but his own seemed to kindle with a demon's triumph.

"So this is the man?" he said, turning to the captain, who stood waiting in the doorway. "You seem to have him tight and fast enough now, Monsieur le Capitaine."

"Aye," growled the captain in his surly bass, "and we will have him tighter and faster by sunrise, unless he can bring proof that he is not the man he seems."

Still the glare of the lantern sought my face; the narrowing eyes seemed to gloat over me, but I did not speak—I would have died ten thousand deaths rather than ask this man's help or mercy.

"He hath a villainous look for one so young," said my late host critically.

"Aye, and a glib tongue at a lie. After giving my men an hour's chase he would have us believe he was a stranger here—an American," replied the captain. "And having used your name, Citizen de Montfort, I have called upon you to speak for him, if there be any truth in his words. That you are a friend

of the people and will uphold no cursed aristocratic treason we know. Therefore if you declare that this man is not the Raoul de Grammont who has been masquerading here as the miller Jules Bouchard, we will take your word and set him free."

"You have no other witness for or against him?" asked de Montfort, slowly.

"We are soldiers, not lawyers, citizen," was the brusque reply. "We are needed at the front, and have no time to dally or quibble. This prisoner hath given you as a witness that he is not the man we seek, and, though there is damning proof against him, we have called you here to give us reason why he shall not be shot as a spy and traitor at sunrise—as his seeming crime deserves. Look at him closely, and say whether he be or be not Jules Bouchard, or rather, the Raoul de Grammont who hath been doing diabolic treason under that name."

"You ask too much, Monsieur le Capitaine," answered de Montfort lightly. "The Comte de Grammont I have not seen for years. Jules Bouchard hath been wise enough to avoid my company; this gentleman here"—he held the lantern nearer—"I do not recognize at all." I did not flinch under the eyes that mocked my plight.

"Speak, prisoner," said the officer roughly. "Are you deaf or dumb? What have you to say to Citizen de Montfort?"

"Nothing," I answered. "Nothing on my own behalf. For he knows me—and I at last know him as liar, traitor, and murderer."

"Fool, madman, hush!" interposed the captain, fiercely.

But de Montfort only lifted his shoulders with a careless laugh. "Poor devil," he said, "doubtless he is mad indeed, with terror and despair. I can say nothing for him, Monsieur le Capitaine—nothing, for I know nothing. In truth, though, I have not failed in my duty to the people. My mind hath been filled with softer thoughts of late. I have persuaded my fair sister-in-law to exchange her weeds for bridal roses. The wedding is to be next week, and I must hurry on my way to my fair *fiancée*, who is in need of a husband's protection in these troubled times.

So since I can do nothing for this luckless prisoner of yours, monsieur, let us begone from this foul and noisome hole."

But for the gyves upon me I would have been at his throat, though the next moment had been my last. As it was I held my breath, and ground my teeth together, lest I should burst forth into some wild fury of impotent rage, at which this devil would only mock.

Not until the heavy door closed behind them did I give way, and then I fell prone upon my face, and such a storm swept over me as I pray none of my blood or name may ever know again. For heaven and earth seemed blotted out in an awful darkness, in which there was no gleam of faith or hope or love. No pity, no justice, no God. It was not of myself I thought. Death, unknown, unpitied, dishonored, seemed a merciful thing in comparison with the life before my sister—life in a demon's power, at a monster's mercy, as Jacques de Montfort's wife.

And as I lay there, tortured and beset by maddening thoughts, with the fire of fever as well as of fury burning in my veins, my mother's prayer, my father's death-cry only a mocking echo now in hopeless darkness, a strange thing happened to me. I heard Polly's voice, sweet and clear, as in my dream, "I love you, Carroll," it murmured. "I have loved you always. I will be yours only, Carroll, in life or in death." So startling was the sweet delusion that it seemed to me I could feel her soft hand upon my shoulder, her breath upon my cheek. And I burst into tears—tears that swept away the hideous horror that was mastering me, and softened my heart and cleared my fevered brain.

Did I not know this Jacques de Montfort to be liar and perjurer? Why, then, should I put any faith in this boast that he knew would be more cruel than a death-blow? I would not believe his words. I would hold to the faith of my father, the hope of my mother. God's will would be done, in justice, in mercy—aye, perhaps in righteous vengeance yet. And then, exhausted by weakness, by fever, by emotion, I sobbed myself, like a weary child, to sleep.

How long I slept I could not tell, for the darkness of my

dungeon gave no record of time. I was wakened by the entrance of a soldier who brought me food and drink.

"Here is wine—a good bottle of it, from the De Grammont cellars," he said with gruff kindness. "Eat and drink to warm your heart. After all, what is it but a soldier's fortune, comrade? To-day for you, to-morrow for me, next day for another. So cheer up and face your fate. And there is a friar up above, and though he seems of a jovial sort he may give you priestly comfort if you have a mind for such in your trouble."

I understood the fellow's rough warning of my coming doom, and told him I would be glad to see a priest, as, indeed, I knew there were grievous sins of hate and anger on my soul. Saying that he would bring him to me, the friendly guard left me, after loosening my bonds so that I could eat and drink. But I had no relish for food, and soon set it aside. As I sat up trying to collect my bewildered thoughts, the mice came scurrying around me, jumping over me in their greediness for my food. I took a grim pleasure in scattering the bread for these, the last guests that the master of Manor Dare, with all his broad acres and storehouses, would ever entertain.

And while thus busied my door swung open again, and my good-natured jailer reappeared and with him a tall monk in habit and cowl.

"*Eh bien*, comrade, here is the good father for you, and one of the right sort, that will not chill a man's blood and weaken his heart by talking devils and hell to him."

"Not I," answered this ghostly comforter, in a hoarse, muffled voice. "A cheery word and a draught of old wine is good for soul as well as body, even in the direst straits."

"And methinks you practise what you preach, father," said the soldier.

"I do, my friend, I do; good wine and good cheer drive away as many devils as holy water. So, *Benedicite*, my son," he added, turning to me, "take heart. I have come to bring thee what help and comfort my holy office can. Leave us alone, my brave," he said to the guard, "that the prisoner may ease his conscience by

good confession. And as I would not hurry him unwisely in this last duty, but would give him the ghostly counsel needful to upbear him in the trial before him, you may lock the door, and go your way for an hour or more, when you can return for me."

"An hour!" laughed the guard. "Methinks a merry man like you could do brisker work. But have it as you will—every one to his trade. I leave you the lantern, for this hole is blacker than death itself. It is now eleven. I will be back in an hour."

And the man turned away, leaving me to this ghostly father, for whose ministrations, I must confess, I had little mind, so harshly had his untimely quips and jest jarred upon me. I thought of Father Jorin and the dignity which, even in his happiest moods, never forsook him, and my soul seemed to recoil from this man, whose levity of tone and speech so ill beseemed his sacred office.

Was this last comfort of a doomed man, the presence of God's minister, only to be a bitterness and a mockery to me? I thought rebelliously. Then, as the door clanked to after my guard with a heavy falling of bolts and bars, I was suddenly caught in the seeming priest's arms, and clasped to his breast.

"*Mon ami, mon ami,*" he murmured in a new voice. "Truest, bravest, best of friends, did you think I would leave you here to die for me?"

"De Grammont!" I cried, recognizing voice rather than face, for though he flung back his cowl as he spoke, he was so shaven and painted, I would never have known him. And then, as I felt all that this reckless, generous return meant, such a rush of feeling came over me that I staggered back against the wall like a drunken man.

"*Mon Dieu*, you are ill, fainting—dying, perhaps, and for me," he cried remorsefully. He caught up the bottle of wine which I had cast aside, and pouring some into the cup which my guard had left me, held the draught to my lips. "Drink, friend, comrade dearer than brother, drink, in God's name, that you may have strength to save yourself, to save me, for I live or die with you. Quick, quick, for we have no time to lose."

My soul, chilled and deadened, roused at his words, mad, as they seemed to my despair, and I drained the cup as he bade me. "So—that is better," he said, as he saw my limbs steadying. "Now to work, *mon ami*. But first we will do a little barring in our turn lest our good jailer return too soon." And peering into a corner of the cell he drew forth a heavy iron chain, which he slipped through hasps in either side of the door, so that only a giant's strength could push it open.

"They are fools that would trap the fox in his own den," he said gaily. "The Counts of Grammont handed down the secrets of their chateau only to the head of the house." He lifted the lantern, and taking a sort of cleaver or thick-bladed knife from the folds of his gown, he stepped into the black void yawning around us, as if searching for something. The glare of the light only showed the moldy stone of the walls and floor closing about us like a tomb, and a couple of empty wine casks that had seemingly been thrown by careless hands into a corner. De Grammont kicked them aside with a little cry of triumph, and in a moment was down on his hands and knees, prying with his cleaver at the stone beneath.

I sprang to his side, my wits quickened, my blood warmed by the wine coursing through my veins, the new hope thrilling my breast. "There is a passage beneath," I said.

"Aye, there is, or there was a dozen years ago. Pray God that it may be open still," he whispered, the sweat pouring down his face with his efforts to move the unyielding slab. "Are you sure of the spot?" I asked, breathlessly.

"Aye, aye, under the second cask to the left, so it hath ever been marked from father to son. *Mon Dieu*, if it does not give way we are lost!"

"Give me a turn at it," I said.

"Nay, poor lad, you have scarce the strength to stand."

But I pushed him aside roughly, for indeed there was no time for ceremony. All the strength of my hardy youth came back to me as I bent my trained muscles to the task that had defied the Frenchman's slender wrist and graceful hand. "Sacre bleu, it

stirs, it moves, it comes," he almost shouted, as the broad slab slowly lifted, and we were able to take it in our hands and holding it up peer down into a manhole below.

De Grammont sprang down into the opening with his lantern. "It is all right, *mon ami*," he said, cheerily. "Come on," and I followed him, my uplifted hands letting the stone fall slowly back into its place, as we descended a narrow stair that ended, after some dozen steps, in an arched passageway, through which, damp and noisome as it was, there swept a cold draught of free air, which was like a new breath of life to me. It grew wider and higher each moment as we hurried on, De Grammont in a rapture of triumph and exultation which he could not repress.

"Ah! the ruffians, the rascals, there will be a howl soon, *mon ami*, but we will not hear it. They will put the jolly friar down as wizard or devil, and our poor, good-natured jailer—let us hope they will not cut his throat. Ah, *mon ami*, *mon ami*, what torture I have undergone at your peril. What agony, what despair! I would have given myself up but for that penitent traitor, François. He came to me where I have been in hiding in old Annette's garret, ever since your capture. He told me what I knew to be the truth—that it was only in terror of his life he had betrayed me, and when I was going to give myself to death, as in honor bound to save you, it was he who, on his knees, implored me to try this way of escape, bringing me the monk's frock and cowl. This poor, penitent François, I trusted him again, for I, too, have learned the pangs of remorse."

And while he thus chattered with the wild excitement of a boy, we hurried on our darkened way, until it suddenly opened amid a tangle of vines and shrubs, on a road deep cut between high, overhanging banks.

Great heaven! what a thrill of joy went through me at sight of the dark-blue night sky sown with stars, at the breath of the free wind upon my face, at the thought that life was mine again—life, life, life!

For I was but twenty, and in the last few hours had passed through all the blackness and horror of death—nay, far worse

than death, for we who are peacefully nearing the Valley of the Shadow know that its twilight falls upon us softly and tenderly, wooing us to rest like weary children in Our Father's care.

But I was twenty then, with eyes undimmed and heart untamed, and my whole being athrob with youth's love of life.

Even to this day my old pulse stirs as I recall the wild rapture of that first breathless moment of freedom, and I can almost see again the picture that was limned forever on my long-darkened eyes, the sweep of the shadowy road, the dim tracery of hedge and tree, the glitter of Orion's starry sword and belt in the blue sky above me, the same Orion Father Jorin had pointed out to us so often from the roof top of Manor Dare.

"Midnight," said de Grammont, as the stroke of a far-off bell came chiming through the darkness. "The hour of ghostly comfort is up, *mon ami*. Chateau de Grammont will echo with a hue and cry in five minutes. We must be gone like the wind now."

And putting his finger to his lips he gave a low whistle like the cry of a bird through the night.

CHAPTER X.

ON THE WINGS OF THE WIND.

THE cry was echoed from a thicket that fringed the opposite side of the road.

"*Bien, bien*, it is all right," said de Grammont, joyfully. "François is there. Come on, *mon ami*; come on."

And we both sprang forward twenty yards or more, where in a clump of bushes a man stood holding two horses, saddled and bridled in military fashion.

"Mount, messieurs, mount, in God's name," he said, excitedly. "Here are the cavalry coats and hats as well," he added, thrusting them upon us. "The password is 'Mirabeau,' and you are bearing despatches to the camp. Ride, messieurs, ride for your lives."

We needed no second bidding, but sprang into the saddles and gave spurs to our horses, pulling on coats and caps as we rode.

De Grammont took the lead, and I followed him neck to crupper. We did not spare our steeds, as all may guess. Their flanks reeked with blood and foam, so did we spur them on, at first through rough paths and forest ways, and then boldly out into the open under the full light of the stars. And as we went on our mad way, the glittering sword of Orion ever stretching above us, I remembered what Father Jorin had told us in our early youth, that this starry warder of the skies represented the great Archangel Michael, triumphant, as heavenly power must ever be, over all that is dark and evil and deadly below.

Surely that mighty sword was guarding me to-night, I felt, with a grateful softening of heart, as I thought of all that I had

escaped. On and on we sped through the paling darkness; twice were we challenged, once as we crossed a bridge spanning, I think, the river Scheldt, and again as we swept through the street of a little village where a company of soldiers was quartered for the night. But François' password saved us, and as we dashed on I could not but wonder at the mysterious ways of Providence, which had turned this man's weak treachery into good, for his betrayal of the night before had won him favor with our enemies, and lingering around Chateau de Grammont in seeming friendliness, he had gained the power to help us to freedom and life.

The east was beginning to brighten when at last my companion drew up on the brow of a wooded hill. We must have traveled six leagues or more since midnight, and our beasts were sorely spent.

"Here we must part, *mon ami*," he said, "though it is sadly against my will. Yonder," and he pointed to a line of lights glimmering palely through the mists of dawn, "is the French camp. There I would be held a spy and traitor, but you will be guest and friend. For General de Lafayette, who so loves America and its people, is in command. Go to him fearlessly, *mon ami*; tell him who and what you are, why you are here, and all that has befallen you. He has the power to help and befriend you."

Lafayette! My heart leaped at the name, so dear, so familiar, so entwined with every high, heroic, and tender memory. Lafayette, my father's friend and comrade, and mourner. Lafayette, the honored and gracious wedding-guest of Manor Dare!

It was almost as if I saw my country's banner waving there, where the glittering lights marked the presence of the gallant soldier who, through long years of storm and strife had made that starry flag his own.

Something of this I said to de Grammont as we stood there in the breaking shadows.

"Then all is well, and I leave you without fear, *mon ami*. While Raoul de Grammont lives he is your friend, your brother, and if God should grant him country and home again, his children



"I kept on down hill and into the valley."

and his children's children will honor and love America, for what you have done and suffered for a hunted, desperate man. May we meet again, *mon ami*, in better days."

His voice shook as he wrung my hand in a parting clasp, and then, giving spurs to his horse, he galloped away into the misty dawn, while I, feeling lonely and bereft indeed without this bold comrade, kept on down the hill and into the valley where the army of Lafayette lay encamped on its march against the Austrian forces that, with the emigrant nobles of France, were threatening the frontier.

The camp had been pitched in and around the small village of La Basse, in whose huts and cottages the officers were quartered. I was not far on my way when I heard a sentinel's challenge, and after giving the password, abandoned all disguise, and frankly declaring my name and country, asked to see the commanding general on business of serious importance. I was put in charge of a young officer, who regarded me with mingled deference and suspicion.

The reveillé had just sounded, and through the stir and bustle of the awakening camp I was led to a small cabin and left there under surveillance. Miserable hole that it was, I was glad of its rest and peace after the wild terror and excitement of the last few hours. I sank down exhausted on a pile of straw in the corner, my horse with its suspicious cavalry accouterments had been led away, and with the sound of bugles, the tap of drums, the clank of arms around me, my thoughts flew back to my last meeting with General Lafayette, the leader of this embattled host.

It was on my sister's wedding-day when, after the feasting, the company had scattered over the lawns and gardens of Manor Dare, and I who, shy young lout that I was, had avoided our gay, noble guests, come suddenly and unaware upon the gallant Marquis and our own General Washington, standing under the great oak, whence could be seen the wide sweep of field and woodland and shore, melting into the sunlit distance. I think they had been speaking of my father, for when I would have

started away at sight of them, the General called me, saying something to his companion I did not catch. And the Marquis had laid a kindly hand on my arm.

"So this is the young *Sieur* of this noble heritage?" he said. "A sturdy shoot, he seems, of the fallen tree," and he had added merrily that it was almost time for me to be married as well—for he himself had taken a bride when only sixteen. And though I could scarcely hope that the great Marquis had retained any memory of that meeting through all the storm and stress of these later years, the thought of his friendliness gave me courage, and it seemed that the strain on my overwrought nerves relaxed, so that despite myself I dropped off, as weary youth will, into a heavy, dreamless sleep.

How long I slept there undisturbed I do not know, but it must have been far into the day, for when I wakened the sun was pouring brightly into the one window of the little cabin, and a man wrapped in a soldier's heavy cape was standing over me. I sprang to my feet. Despite the change that time and toil and trial had wrought in the gallant wedding-guest of Manor Dare, I recognized the Marquis de Lafayette!

As I faltered his name he stretched his hand to me. "I came to search, to question, but it is needless. You are your father's image, my son. It was Roger Dare, the brave comrade of long ago, that lay before me where you slept."

I was startled, touched beyond words. That he should have held such tender memory of me or mine through all these years was more than I had dared to hope.

"Faugh, this is a foul place that they have thrust you. Let us go where there is light and air," and he led the way, I dust-grimed and stained with the blood and sweat of my wild ride following, along a narrow path, where half a dozen sentinels saluted silently, as we passed into the two-roomed cottage that served for headquarters. Aides, staff officers, couriers, all the glittering entourage of a General in command, made respectful way for us as we passed through the crowded outer chamber into the smaller one beyond, where a rude camp bed, a writing-desk,

and a large map of the surrounding country nailed to the wall constituted all the furnishing.

"This is scant return, *mon ami*, for American hospitality," said the General, "but we are on the march through a beggared land. And now sit down on the cot beside me and tell me why and how you are here, in such sore straits and strange guise?"

And then I told him, this friend of my country and my father, all, concealing nothing, as Monsieur de Grammont and my own heart advised.

He heard me at first with quiet gravity, that quickened as I went on into eager interest, fierce indignation.

"Ah, the rascal, the coward, the infamous villain," he interposed as I told of de Montfort's treachery. "Something of this I guessed when I sent your sister warning to return to her own people, something of this, but not all. It is such men as this that are fastened on poor France now, preying on her woes, sucking her life-blood, rousing her into fury. This unhappy France, that in its fever for freedom hath gone mad. *Mon ami*, I have tried to hold her, but in vain. I have tried to guide, to save, but the end must come, it is coming fast. My power is gone."

"Impossible!" I cried, "here at the head of France's army! Surely—"

"Aye," he interrupted, "but assailed by liars, defamers, enemies on every side. In a little while, *mon ami*, you will see, you will see. But as yet," he added, quickly, "I indeed command the army of France, and can befriend you, reckless boy that you have been. But at twenty—at twenty only the coward, the sluggard is wise. At twenty I had half France on a hunt for the mad young marquis, who had fled to fight for another race and another world. So as you have confessed all I absolve you," he continued, smiling, "but not a word to another until you are safe across the sea.

"And now let us see what is to be done. First we must find you clothes befitting your name and station. I have a young aide about your build, who will lend all that you need. Then, money—"

I told him I still had de Montfort's purse containing some twenty louis.

"Not enough by half," said the General. "I must be your banker for fifty more, which I know will be safe as in the Bank of England. For you must take this fair sister of yours out of this rascal's power without delay. I will furnish you with escort to Chateau de Montfort, and safe passport for Madame la Veuve Montfort and yourself across our lines into Flanders, whence you can make quick return by way of Antwerp or Rotterdam to America. Ah, *cet bel Amerique*," he added enthusiastically, as he laid a hand upon my shoulder, "how blessed you are, *mon fils*, to call that happy land your home!"

And so it happened that in little more than an hour, I, dressed and equipped as a gentleman of France, was on my way to Chateau de Montfort, under the safeguard of my friend and benefactor, and escorted by two officers of his staff, Messieurs Varennes and de Noailles. The last named, a man of mature years, was a relative of the General and high in his confidence.

As none of us knew the country we took a stupid-looking oaf from the village as guide. He led us by a road that, bad enough from the first, grew more and more villainous as we advanced into the uplands.

Speedy travel was impossible, and as our horses picked their way over rocks and gullies, Monsieur de Noailles told me much of Jacques de Montfort that made my own knowledge of him clearer.

Men like my companion, wise and cool in the whirlpool of folly and sin seething around them, held this base scion of a noble stock in the contempt he deserved, but which stung him into a hatred deadly and malignant against their kind—as gambler, usurer, money-lender, he preyed upon rich and poor alike—fattening his own purse on the needs and perils of the times.

"It is said of him," continued Monsieur de Noailles, "that he leads a double life—sometimes being workman and peasant, that he may use his wits and powers to kindle the rising fury of the people into fiercer flame, and then turning nobleman that he may buy and sell secrets perilous to freedom and life."

I thought of Monsieur Beauchamps' warning in America, of the withering curse I had heard breathed by the old man in the Paris hotel, and I grew hot and fierce with wrath and impatience to be at my journey's end.

Now the wildness of the road had somewhat softened into a gentler gloom of forest, through which we urged our horses more eagerly. Glades and thickets and open stretches of greenery made this a lordly hunting-ground, that had doubtless echoed for centuries to the cheery notes of hound and horn. But so great was the silence and shadow brooding upon it to-day that a chill fell even upon the bold spirits of my companions, who knew naught of Jacques de Montfort's worst and deadliest crime.

"*Sacre bleu!*" muttered Varennes, "let us hurry on. This is like a place accursed." And in a moment more we were at the great stone gate with its grinning boar's head, and the old chateau rose before us, in truth a lordly pile, the ancient donjon tower surmounted by gables and pinnacles of later days, the moat, a terraced garden spanned by a pillared causeway that led to the wide-arched door. But not a sound greeted our approach, not even the bark of a watch-dog. Everywhere was the silence of death.

Fierce with unconfessed fear and impatience, I sprang from my horse and knocked loudly at the great portal. There was no answer save dull echoes, that seemed to reverberate from empty distance. Again I thundered with fist and foot, until the unyielding oak shook like a reed in the wind.

Monsieur de Noailles, who had made a circuit of the chateau on horseback, now dismounted and joined me.

"There is not a sign of life," he said. "The place, like so many we have passed on our march, is absolutely deserted."

"I will not believe it," I said, hotly. "It is but another of that devil de Montfort's treacheries. I will force my way in and see what is here."

"Impossible," said de Noailles, "unless we had a keg of gunpowder. The place is closed like a sealed tomb."

The word struck a deadlier chill into my heart. My God! I

thought, despairingly, have I come across a thousand leagues of ocean, and through trials and perils unspeakable, to find only—this?

I looked up at the frowning walls, so fierce and silent in their defiant strength, and the white woe of my face aroused the sympathy of my companions, inured though they were to human misery.

"Courage, *mon ami*," said young Varennes. "What more natural than that Madame, your sister, should have sought safer shelter at the tidings of open war—"

"Or even returned to Paris," added de Noailles. "There are surely some farmers or peasants in the neighborhood. We will ride further on and make inquiry."

As he spoke my eyes fell upon our guide, who had remained seated on his rough nag, stolidly awaiting the result of our colloquy. There was a change on the dull, heavy face, that made me spring to his side and catch the bridle of his horse.

"This man can tell us what we would know," I said.

"And if he can, he shall," added de Noailles. "Speak, you rascal, or we will find a way to loosen your tongue. Where is Madame the Comtesse de Montfort?"

"Messieurs, I do not know, I do not know," was the frightened answer.

"How long hath the chateau been closed like this?"

"Four, five, six weeks," faltered the terrified man, waving his hand for each number.

"And Monsieur Jacques de Montfort—when did you see him?"

The clown hesitated.

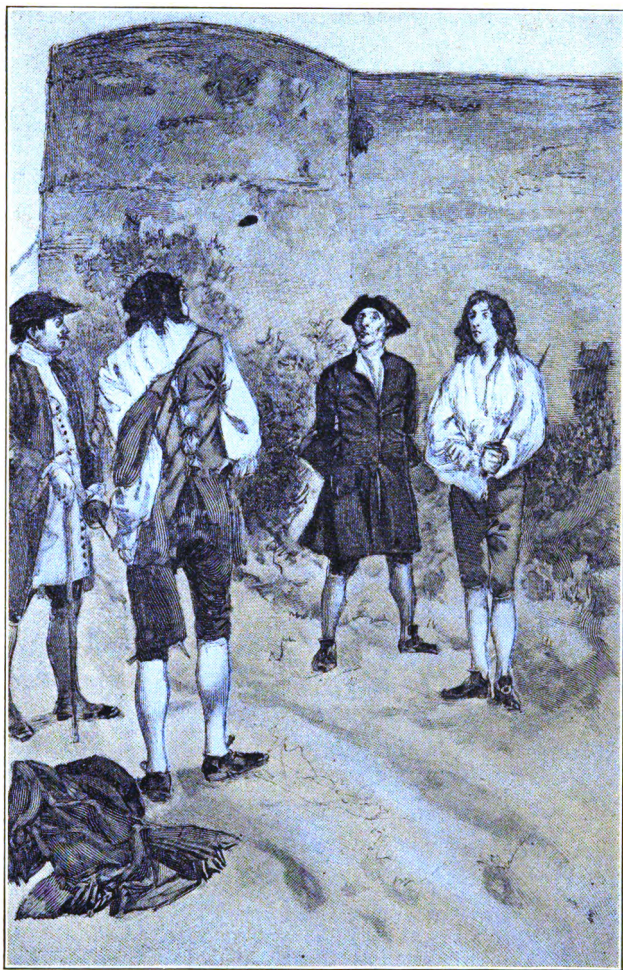
"Speak or I will cut off your ears!" said Varennes, drawing his sword.

"To-day, monsieur," was the trembling answer.

"When and where?" asked his interlocutor, excitedly.

The oaf was chattering now like one with an ague.

"As—as we came hither, messieurs, but—but—he was not the gentleman, the Monsieur de Montfort. He was Jacques,



"De Montfort and I were facing each other."

Jacques of the people, Jacques of the hills, Jacques, the son of Maladette."

"It is as I told you, monsieur," said de Noailles. "Half peasant and half noble—this de Montfort, like all mongrels, hath only the vilest and worst strains of both. He is lurking around here in disguise."

I scarcely heard his words, so fierce and deadly was the mood that came upon me on learning that this villain was near. It was not the madness of passion, but a white heat of wrath that seemed to clear my bewildered thoughts and make me steady and strong.

I took five louis from my purse and held them before the guide's bewildered eyes.

"Show me where to find this Jacques and these shall be yours," I said.

"Monsieur," began de Noailles, but I interrupted him. "I do not ask further help from you, messieurs. You can leave or follow me as you will, but I go to this de Montfort, let the meeting be where it may."

"I follow you," said Varennes, with the quick impulse of five and twenty.

"Whither, ye young madmen?" asked the wiser de Noailles.

But the sight of the gold—gold beyond his wildest dreams, had loosened our guide's trembling tongue.

"Messieurs, messieurs, I will show you. It is not far, only—only I dare not face him or he will put the evil eye on me; he hath the power from his mother, La Maladette, who can kill with a glance."

"Go on, you fool, or you will meet swifter death with a blow," cried Varennes, impatiently.

"Come, then, messieurs," said the badgered wretch, clutching the gold which I held to him. "Come, come." And mounting our horses we followed him back through the gate of the deserted castle, whence the road we had followed thus far continued on, rising ever upward to the wilder heights of the Ardennes.

"I saw him there," said the guide, pointing to a turn in this

road. "Even as you passed in the castle gate not fifteen minutes ago."

I asked no more. Why he was there, what new treachery he might be planning, what trap I might find laid for me, I did not stop to think. I only knew that this villain, who must answer to me for my sister, was within my reach. I put spurs to my horse and galloped on, de Noailles and Varennes close behind me—though of their presence I did not know or care. We had not gone half a mile when with a wild leap of my heart I saw just beyond me, not indeed the Monsieur de Montfort, courteous and elegant gentleman of the Paris salon, but the workman of Rouen, in his cap and blouse, the Jacques of the hills, the son of the peasant, wearing the garb and mien that gave him, in these mad days, power and leadership a noble de Montfort could not claim. On what devilish work he was bent amid the fevered, famishing people, dazed with the new clamor of war about them, I could not guess, but he was on the way to his native hills as Jacques the peasant-born.

So omniscient in evil had the man seemed to me, that I forgot he could not know of my safety, that he would not recognize among the three officers apparently making a reconnaissance of the country the helpless wretch he had left doomed to death not twenty-four hours before.

As we swept down the road in a swirling cloud of dust, he stepped aside to let us pass, when, with a bound like that of the panther of my own forest, I leaped from my horse and confronted him.

"My sister!" I said, hoarsely. "My sister and your murdered brother's wife, Jacques de Montfort! Where is she?"

For the moment he was struck dumb, and could only stare at me in horror, his lips moving without speech. Then as de Noailles and Varennes drew up beside me he realized that I was mortal man, and not the avenging spirit of Carroll Dare, and he found voice.

"I know nothing of your brother or sister," he answered with an oath. "Is it for murder or robbery that I am thus held up

in the highway by three noble gentlemen?" he added with bold scorn.

"For neither, Monsieur de Montfort, as you well know," answered de Noailles, coldly. "What quarrel there is between you and Monsieur Dare I do not ask. But we have come with him to Chateau de Montfort at General de Lafayette's orders to give safeguard and escort to Madame the Countess across our lines, as this gentleman, her brother and natural protector requests. The chateau is closed and deserted. Can you tell us where we can find Madame the Countess?"

"I do not know," was de Montfort's reply, and then, with the word "Liar," I struck him in the face. He hurled a blow back at me, and in a moment de Noailles and Varennes had leaped from their horses, and there was a cry of "Swords, messieurs, swords. Do not kill each other like clowns," and almost ere I knew it, so fierce was the confusion, de Montfort and I had stripped off our coats and were facing each other in a battle for life or death.

CHAPTER XI.

CHATEAU DE MONTFORT.

AND then we fought there in the sunlight, fought, God forgive us, with murderous hate in our hearts and hot breathings and cursings on our lips, as we lunged and parried and thrust, our flashing, ringing blades alert for a death stroke.

Often, in the calm of later years, have I trembled at the thought of what my judgment would have been if I had been sent, thus fierce with hate and vengeance, before the throne of God. But in the madness of this hour I thought not at all, not even of the desperate chance I was taking, for I was no swordsman. Indeed, with us the foils were only used for graceful sport, hence I was but a poor match for this man, trained by skilled masters in every turn of wrist and steel. But though de Noailles trembled for me, I held my own fairly enough, until, making a sudden stumble over some roughness in the road, I went down, and in a moment de Montfort dealt a murderous thrust at my heart, that I caught, God knows how, on my left arm, the blood spurting from the gash like a fountain.

"Foul, foul, you coward!" cried de Noailles, starting forward. But whether it was rage or pain, or the sight of my own blood that gave me mad strength, I do not know, but like a flash I was up, with a lunge for which my adversary, thinking I had my death stroke, was unprepared. It caught him in the shoulder, the shock sending the blade skimming from his hold.

"My sister!" I gasped, with my sword-point to his breast. "Tell me of my sister, villain, or I will send you to the devil with your next breath."

The wretch stared at me with bulging eyes, the sweat starting from his brow, speechless for the moment with craven fear.

"Speak, or I kill you," I panted. "Messieurs, bear witness to what this man says," for there was a red blur gathering on my own vision and I felt myself sinking fast.

"Where is the Comtesse de Montfort?"

"In the donjon tower," came the hoarse answer from the livid lips, and then the staring eyes narrowed into a last malignant triumph. "She hath gone mad," were the words that seemed hissed into my failing ear. And then the red blur went out in blackness and I knew nothing more.

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When my sight and wits came back to me I found myself in a great bed, richly spread and curtained, and in a spacious chamber with silken hangings and tapestried walls.

My head seemed to rest heavily on the downy pillows, my arm was swathed in linen bandages from wrist to shoulder, and all the fire and strength of my youth was gone.

From below came cheery sounds of deep voices, of tramping and neighing horses, and the rattle and clank of arms. I was vainly striving to place myself, when a face that I recognized looked down on me.

"De Noailles!" I said, my voice sounding strangely weak and thin, "What house is this?"

"Good!" he answered heartily. "It is about time for you to wake up and ask questions. This is Chateau de Montfort, *mon brave*, held by the Twentieth Lanciers at the orders of General de Lafayette."

"De Montfort!" I echoed, and my voice quivered with a question I could not put into words.

"All is right, *mon ami*," said this wise friend soothingly. "Madame la Comtesse is here, and you will see her as soon as you are strong enough."

"Go on," I said, fixing my eyes upon his face. "There is more to tell."

"*Eh bien*, is that not good news enough for a sick man?" he said. "Monsieur Lefèvre will be upon me tooth and nail if I quicken his patient's pulse."

"It will leap indeed if you do not tell me more, de Noailles. How long have I been here?"

"Three days. When you dropped on our hands we determined to force an entrance here, *coûte que coûte*. That rascally guide knew a door that could be opened, and so we are here, and very comfortable quarters we find it. So now, since you find all things well, turn over again and go to sleep."

"No, I can not, de Noailles, I can not. You are hiding something from me. Tell me all, I beseech you. My sister is here, you say, and not by my side. How did you find her, de Noailles, where?"

He saw it was vain to elude my questioning; my eyes were beginning to burn, my cheek to flame.

"Then if you must hear it, *mon ami*, she was in the donjon tower in the care of his mother, the peasant woman, the old Maladette."

"And—*mad?*" I whispered. "It was so, that villain said—it was the last word I heard from his accursed lips. Mad! My sister, my poor sister—"

"Nay, not mad, *mon ami*," interposed de Noailles. "The poor lady is only a little distraught, and small wonder."

And then, softening to my weakness the story that I heard afterward with fierce soldierly bluntness, he told me how, finding me helpless on their hands, he and Varennes had forced further confession from de Montfort regarding my sister, and he had told them that, her health and mind failing, he had brought his mother to the castle to nurse and care for her, and knowing the peril of the times, they had retired for more safety into the donjon tower, which stood apart from the outer buildings in the center of the castle court.

"Which might have sounded fair enough, *mon ami*, from any lips but those of Jacques de Montfort," continued de Noailles, warming up, despite himself.

"*Eh bien*, we demanded entrance and forced it. *Sacre bleu*, what an old wild cat we found ruling as chatelaine behind those closed walls. What she would have done to us, I can not say, but

that she heard her son lay hurt without, and she flew to him, screeching like the wild mountain thing she is. And I took command of the castle in my General's name, as indeed there was sore need. The servants had been banished or fled, for this old Maladette is the terror of the country-side. Indeed, it is fully believed that she bewitched the old Comte de Montfort into marrying her, though in truth most wives do that, and she hath the remains of a wild beauty yet.

"But the fierce triumph of finding herself mistress in this castle where her rights had been denied her fairly turned her brain. Such a den as she made for herself in this donjon tower, which is a dark, foul place, unused for years. But she heaped it with soft rugs and carpets, and hung silk and velvet on the walls, like a wild beast lines its cave, and here she hath been for weeks, with a dullard and his wife from her own mountains to wait on her, and the gentle lady of the castle, too distraught to know her own woe, helpless in her hands. Nay, be still, *mon brave*, she is established in her own apartments, and tended by gentle and faithful hands now."

"The child?" I asked, striving in vain to steady my trembling voice, for indeed the strength of my manhood was gone, and I was close to womanish tears.

"The child!" De Noailles forgot all prudence and breathed a fierce soldier's oath. "If you could have seen him, monsieur, when we found him at last, hiding in a cellar, where he had fled in terror at our coming. Half starved, half clothed, bruised, beaten by that she-devil who saw in him all her own son had lost. Nay, nay, *mon brave*," as the hoarse sob I could not repress burst from me. "Be brave, be strong; all danger is over. They are safe now, mother and child, safe in each other's arms."

"Let me see them," I pleaded, starting up eagerly among my pillows. "De Noailles, I will not sleep for the horror that is upon me. Let me see and know the worst."

The wildness of my eyes and tone mastered him.

"Come on then, thou headstrong boy, or the fever will rise on

thee again. Come—perhaps it is best, though what Lefèvre will say to me I dare not think.”

He helped me to rise, and flung about me a loose greatcoat, and then, with his arm around me, led me from my room and through a corridor flooded with the soft glow of sunset. I could hear the voices of the troopers below, and the clatter of their tins as they were serving the evening meal, and, with de Noailles’ strong arm about me, I felt my heart warm with gratitude to the great general whose power was thus upholding me and mine in our sore need.

Thus I crept on slowly, for I was still weak as an old and broken man, until we reached an open doorway through which a tidy, brown-faced woman was passing, with a tray of food and drink.

“Madame hath eaten this evening, Lisette?” asked de Noailles.

“Aye, that she hath, monsieur, right heartily, and as for the little one he is growing stronger every hour on porridge and milk without stint.”

“Good; keep him at it, Lisette. This is madame’s brother, who would like to see her.”

“Ah, yes, yes,” said the old woman nodding. “Monsieur will not mind that she does not know him—that she has forgotten every one, every one but le petit Armand. The poor madame, she hath had such sorrow that the good God hath put her soul to sleep. But it will wake now, monsieur,” and I could have kissed the kind old woman for the cheer in her tone. “Now that the sun shines again, her soul will wake.”

And then we entered a spacious chamber rich with carvings and mirrors and draperies, and all the soft and dainty things that women crave.

But I saw only the picture framed in the great oriel window, where a slender, black-robed, white-coifed woman sat, aureoled by the sunset, a golden-haired child on her knees. And years of time and leagues of space seemed to vanish at the sight, for this was not the lovely bride of Manor Dare, nor the peeress of France



"We found him at last, hiding in a cellar."

—but my mother in the first days of her widowhood, with little Roger in her arms, singing the vesper hymn that had lulled us all to rest.

“Day is done, and darkness nigh—
Mary, mother, hear our cry.
Let thy white-winged angels keep
Watch about us while we sleep.”

“Mamma, look, look!” said the child, pointing to where de Noailles stood regarding them, and the music died on the poor singer’s lips, and she turned such a look of terror on me as I pray God I may never see in woman’s face again. I broke from de Noailles, and tottered over to her, falling on my knees beside her chair.

“Elinor,” I faltered, “Elinor, dear sister, do you not know me?”

“I beseech you to have pity on me, monsieur,” she murmured. “Hide me here in safety—hide me with the child.”

“Dearest sister, you are safe, safe forever,” I said, striving to steady my breaking voice. “Can you not remember your brother, your brother Carroll, dear?”

“Carroll!” she echoed softly. “Carroll!”

“Mamma, yes, yes! Have you forgotten?” asked the child on her knee. “There was Carroll and Giles and Roger and Martin—you told me about them all, mamma, and the white roses on the porch, and the trees on the lawn, and big Bevis and little Polly. Poor mamma has forgotten, monsieur,” said this little nobleman of five, “but I know about them all.”

“And you shall know more about them, my brave little man, for I have come to take you and mamma home again. Home again, Elinor,” I said, taking her trembling hand in mine, and speaking slowly and clearly, that my words might pierce the clouds upon her brain.

“Back to dear Manor Dare, Elinor, where mother is watching and waiting for you, standing on the porch under the roses, while the boys come trooping up the garden path, Roger and Martin and Giles. And Father Jorin, good Father Jorin, in his black

cassock, and the beads at his waist, and the little round cap on his head—don't you remember him, Elinor? And the big drawing-room with your spinnet in the corner, and father's picture on the wall?"

The fright had died out of her face now, and she was looking at me with eager eyes, with parted lips, like one held by a spell. But her soul, as old Lisette had said, was still asleep, and she saw the pictures I put before her as one sees the figures in a dream.

"Poor mamma does not remember," said the "little gentleman of France" on her knee, "but I know them all, monsieur—old Bevis and Nanchita and Roger, who had curls like mine. And we would have run away together, mamma and I, but Uncle Jacques would not let us. And then mamma got sick and forgot everything, and *she* came, the old madame. Ah, she was bad!" The boy clenched his small hands. "She was very bad to mamma and to me, monsieur. She shut me in the dark cellar with the rats. If I had not been Armand de Montfort, who must be a brave soldier like papa, I would have died of fear."

I caught this little hero of my race and blood from his mother's knee, and clasped him to my heart (where in sooth he has held his place ever since). Elinor gave a low cry of terror, and then—then the sight of her boy laughing in my arms seemed to strike some broken chord into waking anguish. She burst into a wild passion of tears and sobs that seemed to shake body and soul.

"Mamma, mamma," cried the child, springing back to her side, while I looked on dumb with pity and grief and remorse that I had thus moved her.

"*Bien, bien*, what is this? what is this?" said a gruff voice at the door, and Monsieur Lefèvre, a brown-faced, keen-eyed little man, came forward hurriedly. "Where is my patient? Ah, you reckless young rogue, what are you doing here? And madame—" he paused suddenly at sight of the sobbing, weeping woman.

"For heaven's sake, soothe her, quiet her, monsieur," I implored.

"Quiet her!" he echoed. "No, no, no. This is good, good. Let her weep, let her weep—her eyes have been dry for months.

These tears will sweep away all the mists from her poor brain. This is good, very good. Come back to your bed, mad boy that thou art, and be still. The poor lady is safe, now that she can weep."

And indeed so it proved, for though there was no great change all at once, the shadows began to lift, surely but slowly, from that hour. It was a week before I was able to leave Chateau de Montfort. Of the kindness and hospitality shown to me and mine during that time by the officers of General de Lafayette, I can not say enough. I rejoice that in later years I was able to thank these noble gentlemen and return them something of the courtesy they had so graciously extended to me in my helplessness.

I learned, as I grew better, that Jacques de Montfort, whose wound had been but a slight one, had disappeared with the old hag Maladette, who had doubtless carried him off to her own home in the hills. Caspar and Jeanne, too, had fled at the coming of the soldiers, and there was only the prattle of little Armand to tell us of the cruelty and persecution that had well-nigh blighted the white rose of Manor Dare in her widowed home.

But it was God's will that I should witness the stroke of His justice before I left this unhappy France.

It was the eve of our departure. All arrangements had been made for the morrow, when, in my sister's carriage, with six stout Lanciers as escort, we were to cross the French lines into Flanders.

I had been walking slowly up and down the sunlit terrace, for I was still feeble from loss of blood, little Armand, who had taken wondrously to "*mon Oncle Carroll*," prattling beside me, when I saw four sturdy soldiers coming down the avenue bearing on a stretcher the body of a dead or wounded man. I knew the stir of battle was not far distant, and my first anxious thought was of some skirmish or advance that might delay our journey, for the doctor had assured me that a removal to happier scenes would prove the speediest cure for my sister's shaken mind.

The bearers of the stretcher stopped as they reached the causeway over the moated garden, and then I saw that behind them, in

charge of another soldier, was a prisoner—a white-haired, ashen-faced old man, trembling with terror and excitement.

For a moment some vague remembrance perplexed me, and then, as if by a flash, I recognized the old visitor in Monsieur de Montfort's apartments, whose fierce, parting words to my host had so unpleasantly impressed me. As they waited, de Noailles came galloping down the road, and after a word or two to the party cantered on across the causeway and dismounted at my side.

"Here is your vengeance in earnest, *mon ami*," he said. "Jacques de Montfort hath been found, wounded to death, it is thought, by yon old madman in the woods beyond the gate. Shall we bring him here, where, indeed, he hath no claim, or let him die like the dog he is at your sister's doors?"

For a moment I hesitated, for a moment, heaven forgive me, for the child's prattle was still echoing in my ears—it seemed my whole soul rose in a triumph of hate and vengeance and loathing, and I felt that the death of a dog at the doors of the home he had made desolate was only what this wretch deserved. Then the Christian in me conquered. "Bring him in, monsieur, if it be mine to decide—but in God's name let my sister hear or see naught of him."

"Trust me for that," said de Noailles grimly, and then he made a signal to the men, and as they brought the stretcher onward, he told me how de Montfort had been found with a strange dagger buried in his breast, and this old gray-haired man chattering and jabbering beside him.

"From what we can learn from his half-crazed talk his name is Jean Beauchamps, a jeweler of Paris."

"Beauchamps," I echoed, recalling my guest at the Fountain Hotel.

"Aye, and he had a son or brother who fell into this de Montfort's power, whether it was by gambling debt, or some other young escapade, I can not say. The villain hath preyed for years on the follies and weaknesses of the young, as we all know."

(As indeed I did, for had I not, despite my own instinct, been held by his charm?)

"And the old man mortgaged all that he had in the world that the young one might go free. Since then de Montfort hath pressed him for the moneys until he has ruined and maddened him. He followed him here, whether to plead or to threaten, I can not say. De Montfort kicked him from him as he would kick a dog. And the old man, who indeed is half crazed, struck at his heart."

And now the men with the stretcher came on, and despite myself I shrank back, trembling with the strange loathing that at first I had felt for this man, as they bore him past me, up the stairs and into a distant chamber of the chateau, where Lefèvre did what he could for him, but in vain, for he died that night.

It was a frightful death, they told me, for I did not go near him, but old Lisette, who was the vivandière of the Lanciers, and used to scenes of blood and terror, came down from his bedside white and shaking and ready to faint.

"Monsieur, I saw the evil one himself there, with hand outstretched," said the good woman trembling.

"Pah, fool, it was but the shadow of the dying struggle," said old Lefèvre, and then added with a shrug, "But may I never see such dying struggle again."

For myself I slept not a wink that dreadful night, for besides the horror of the dying man upstairs, such an autumn storm burst upon the chateau that it seemed as if defeated devils were raging in fury around us. The winds shrieked and wailed, the rain swept down in fierce torrents, the old north wall, in ruin for a hundred years, went down with a crash that shook the chateau from roof to ground.

And amidst all this turmoil, the whole vision of my three months in France passed before me like a panorama, moving to the thunder and crash of the storm. I realized how God's hand had been stretched above me, shielding and guarding me from the evil that had threatened me, from the moment I touched these shores, coming, as Jacques de Montfort knew I did, when he saw my name booked for the diligence in Rouen, to baffle his

purpose and save the woman whom he was striving to force into a loveless and unholy marriage.

But the storm passed away. Through my eastern window I could catch the first flush of the day breaking through the scattered clouds.

Jacques de Montfort lay dead upstairs in his darkened chamber, and in the glory of the dawning Elinor and I were going home.

CHAPTER XII.

IN THE SUNSET.

IN the glory of this new day we bade adieu to France and its tumults, leaving Chateau de Montfort early in the morning, as I was anxious that Elinor should escape all knowledge of the horror of the night, and hear naught of the clamor that would ensue when old Maladette should come, as she must, to mourn her son.

Poor Jean Beauchamps was found to be delirious with fever, and was sent by de Noailles to the hospice at Courtrai, where, in a few days, he died. What his mad stroke saved us from none can say, but orders were issued by Lefèvre, the surgeon, that none should drink of the water at the castle well until it was tested upon dogs, for de Montfort had been struck down beside the well-spring in the wood, and there was found upon him a packet of such deadly stuff as dastards use to poison the waters of springs and fountains. Happily for all in Chateau de Montfort he had no chance to strike at us with this last envenomed sting.

I strove to put the thought of him from me, as, with Elinor and her child, and a faithful maid (who, banished by Jacques de Montfort, had returned to the chateau on our occupancy, to share her lady's fortunes), I drove away through the gladness of the morning, de Noailles and his stout Lanciers galloping before us, and all the tears of the past night glimmering into rainbows under the joyous beams of day. We had to move slowly at first over the wild, steep roads by which we had come to the chateau, but once on the highway we sped on swiftly as our horses could go, for Lafayette's army was on the move, and we knew not when the tumult of battle or confusion of defeat might block our way.

It was noon when we reached the French outposts, where we parted from our gallant escorts with heartfelt thanks and God-speeds on both sides, even Elinor's still dreamy eyes filling with grateful tears as de Noailles bent to kiss her hand in adieu.

Three miles further we were halted on a bridge, over the little stream that was held by the advance lines of the Austrians.

The officer in command being a German, it was with some difficulty that I made him understand who and what we were, and the purport of our journey at such place and time. But when at last, with the innocent assistance of my little nephew, who had learned to chatter German from his nurse, the situation was explained, Colonel Vogelheim was most courteous and furnished us with pass and escort through the military lines into the town of Courtrai, whence, by easy stages, we traveled to Antwerp, where by great good chance I found the good ship *Wilhelmine* about to sail with a cargo of Dutch merchandise for Baltimore. I took passage on her at once, and on the first of October we happily set sail for the loved land which indeed I had scarcely hoped to see again. It was a pleasant voyage, the salty breath of the ocean giving back to all of us the life and vigor we had lost, little Armand growing into the sturdy strength of his mother's race, and Elinor's cheeks and eyes brightening daily. But it was long before she could talk, or even think of the past. Not until months afterward did we learn all that she had suffered during those long lonely months of widowhood in Chateau de Montfort, when, half guessing her husband's fate, crushed with fear and grief and terror for her child, Jacques de Montfort, as the rightful guardian of the helpless little family, drew his toils closer and closer about them, pressing his odious suit upon her as her only means of safety during these troubled times, and holding her the captive of her love and fears for the boy.

It was at this time, when he thought his victory nearly complete, that I had arrived in France, and by woeful chance met him in the Rouen diligence, for which he had seen me booked. At once he had guessed the object of my coming, and determined to baffle it. To him I owed the ruffianly attack in La Toile d'Araig-

née which so nearly finished me; by his false courtesy I was afterward prevented from making myself known to our Minister in Paris, Mr. Morris, who would have given me all that I needed to continue my journey to my sister, and perhaps, for all men of rank and fashion knew something of de Montfort's character, would have warned me against him.

Of the man's further villainies against me I have told; it being a part of his nature, seemingly, to work evil not openly or boldly, but by devious ways and cunning trickeries none could trace. Happily for Elinor, ere I could come to her help the veil of madness fell about her, giving her, I know not why, a terror that repelled de Montfort from her, and he put her then under his mother's care as we have seen.

That this old mountain wild cat would soon have driven mother and child into an early grave there is little doubt had we not come upon her so speedily and shortened her sway.

All this I have told that I might be done with the dark side of my story forever and turn to happier things, for now the Old World, with its quakings of thrones and monarchies was a thousand leagues behind us, and the *Wilhelmine* dropped her stout Dutch anchor in a wide, sunlit harbor where the starry flag for which our father had died waved from wharf and mast-head, seeming to bid us joyous welcome home. But for no spoken word, though I knew there were scores of friends and relatives in the town who would gladly greet me, not even for a glimpse of my kind godfather, in his manor house, nor for the St. Mary's packet, which was to sail on the morrow, would I wait now, so feverish was my longing for the sight of my own beloved home. I took post chaise from Baltimore, bargaining for relays of horses as men did in those days when they would make reckless haste. And so it happened that although we only left Baltimore two hours before noon, the sun was just setting as, with our last team still fresh, we turned into our own roadway, that led along the river-bank and up through Sefton Wood to Manor Dare.

It was a November eve, and the soft haze of the Indian summer lay upon river and shore. What I felt I can not put in

words, as I saw, from a rise in the road, my own broad lands opening before me, field and meadow and upland, mellowed by the golden mist upon them, while from its oak-crowned height Manor Dare, flashing back the sunset from its western casements, seemed ablaze with welcoming light. Elinor's sweet face was akindle with joy, while little Armand's merry shouts as he recognized the spots made familiar by nursery songs and stories, lightened the mother's heart, that but for this childish glee might have found itself athrill with emotions too strong to bear.

And indeed, as we swept along the shining curve of the river, and into the autumn glory of Sefton Wood, my own heart was too full for speech.

On bleaker points the forest had been swept bare, but here it was still all aglimmer with crimson and gold, with radiant vistas kindled by the sunset into dazzling splendors opening on every side of us. And as my thoughts went back with a rush of tenderness to that June morning when all this glory was tremulous bud and bloom and tender leaf, my heart gave a sudden leap, for standing there at a turn of the road, watching our oncoming with startled eyes, was a little figure, at sight of which mother, sister, brother—hope and fear and joy and doubt—all were forgotten.

I sprang from the swaying carriage, and calling to the driver to go on to the house, was at Polly's side. She gave a startled cry, and then (reckless fool that I was!) reeled back white and faint, and would have fallen had I not caught her in my arms. And as I held her there, death-pale and trembling as she was, the eyes that looked up into my face told me all that I asked. Polly was my own, as she had said to me in my dream, mine only and forever, in life and in death, and as I truly believe and hope, beyond death, in the brighter life to come.

"Carroll!" at last she found breath to whisper. "Is it—Carroll? Oh, I am dreaming—I—I—am dying, and you have come to me, Carroll."

"Dying, dreaming, my little love—no. It is I, indeed, your own Carroll, living, loving, holding you to his heart." And I



"It was with some difficulty I made him understand who we were."

vouched for my reality by half a dozen kisses on the sweet little startled face.

At that she snatched herself from my arms and was my little brier rose Polly again.

"And I have grieved for you, wept for you, almost died for you, you cruel, cruel boy," she cried, bursting into a passion of tears.

"Polly darling," I began.

"I have, I have," she interrupted me, sobbing. "Oh, why did you do it, why did you go away, and—break—break my heart?"

"Break your heart, Polly?"

"Yes, yes, yes. You did not even say good-by to me; you did not give me a word or look, and then—and then—when Captain Brent came back, and told us that he was afraid something had happened, and we did not get a word or line," she broke down again, hiding her face against the trunk of a fatherly old oak, and then I saw how thin and wasted she was, and how the little hand pressing her cheek was white as wax.

"Polly, darling, you have been ill, too," I said in new affright, but she only sobbed on. "Polly, sweetheart, listen. I have been indeed close to death—so close that only a miracle of God's mercy saved me. But through all that I have suffered, wounds, illness, imprisonment, treachery—nay, through the horrors and chill of coming death, the thought of you has never been out of my mind or your image from my heart. I loved you as a child, Polly, I have loved you as a boy, and now I love you with all the deeper, truer, stronger love of a man."

"Yet—yet—you never said good-by," faltered Polly, with quivering lips.

"Because my heart was too sore," I answered. "I thought that Giles had supplanted me, Polly."

"Giles!" and the sweet, tear-wet face turned upon me with something of the olden flash and sparkle. "Giles! Ah, you stupid Carroll! As if I could ever care for such a feather-top as Giles, save as playmate and friend and brother."

"Then brother we will make him to-morrow," I said, clasping her all rosy with blushes to my heart.

"To-morrow! You are not in your sober senses, Carroll. To-morrow, indeed. Let me go, sir. I have said nothing, nothing—"

"Then say it now," I whispered. "Say what you said to me in my warning dream, in my peril of death, Polly."

"What was that?" she asked, looking up at me with startled eyes.

"I love you, Carroll, I have loved you always. I will be yours only—in life and in death," I repeated.

"Oh, Carroll!" she said, breathlessly, "did you hear it? For that was what I indeed whispered every night when I thought you dead. And I—I begged my good angel to take the message to you wherever you were, that you might know, Carroll, that you might know what you were too dull to see, you stupid boy, and I too foolish to tell. That there was no love, no hope, no joy, no home for me on earth but this," and Polly put her arms about my neck and laid her dear head upon my breast, and I knew by the sweet, strange earnestness of look and voice that the little brier bud I had left in the June sunshine had burst through tears and trials into the perfect rose. How long we would have stayed there under the friendly oak, forgetful of all things but each other, I can not say, but there came such a shouting and clamoring along the road as effectually wakened us from our blissful dream, and there swept down upon us a very whirlwind of joyous welcome. Giles, Martin, Roger, servants—black and white—old and young, even the dogs barking in glad chorus. It was Giles who first reached me, and if I had cherished a doubt of my gay, careless brother it vanished at the sound of his breaking voice, the grip of his hand.

"Carroll, dear old boy, dear brother," he cried, and we were brothers indeed forever after, all my mad jealousy, all his boyish vanity lost in new trust and love, deepened by the peril of loss and the shadow of death into an earnest strength that would never again fail.

And Martin and Roger, sturdy boys though they were, clung

around my neck and covered my cheeks with kisses, while my faithful servants pressed around me, many of the older ones crying with joy, and old Bevis, forgetting his age, leaped upon me, baying like a year-old hound.

I think Polly would have vanished in the glad *melée* but that with a merry shout my brothers linked hands around her in a ring, holding her a blushing prisoner, while my sturdy blacks in their joy lifted me on their broad shoulders, and thus, with my sweet little captive bound in living chains beside me, I made my triumphal return to Manor Dare, passing through the gates and into the garden, where the late roses still lingered, and on to the pillared porch ablaze with the sunset, where my mother, with Elinor and her boy and Father Jorin stood watching for me. And amid a great shout of joy and welcome, I sprang from my bearers' shoulders and knelt at my dear mother's feet, my mission done.

Thus ends my story, for it was only of that stretch of my life that hath ever blazed in fierce, fiery hues against the peace and quietude of my after years that I took my pen in hand to write.

Yet there are those around me who love to hear of the gay wedding that followed, not indeed, as soon as I had wished, for Polly's mother would hear of no such unseemly haste, and it was not until Christmas time that Sefton Hall, white with snow-blossoms, and wreathed with holly and ivy, gave a bonny bride to Manor Dare. Never was there a blither wedding, for no shadow of parting rested on its joy. Even Elinor, grown strong and well in the perfect peace and love of her home, dropped her weeds, that she gently said would sadden the feast, and came out for the nonce a fair lily in bridal white, and Armand, as Polly's page, looked in his velvet and lace the gallant little nobleman he was. The guests came from near and far, and both Sefton Hall and Manor Dare were crowded from roof to ground. There were bonfires on the hills and barbecues on the lawn, and all made merry in the simple, homely fashion that leaves only sweet thoughts and memories for the after years.

And Polly! Polly as a bride was a picture to make a man hold his breath, lest she should vanish from his sight.

There were twenty bridesmaids, I think, for Madame Sefton would have no stint in state or splendor, and fair maidens were all of them. Indeed one, Elise Dubois, from Polly's old convent school in New Orleans, turned Giles' head and won his heart within forty-eight hours. But my little bride was amongst them as a moon among paling stars.

I was like one in a blissful day-dream, while blessings and prayers and good-bys were spoken, and pretty Elise caught the bouquet Polly tossed back among the bridesmaids and Giles called out gaily:

"Au revoir, Mistress Dare."

And at the name, that had struck such a pang into my heart six months ago, I awoke. Mistress Dare! Little Polly Sefton was no more. There at my side, in all the radiance, beauty, and tenderness of womanhood, bound at last to me by blessed ties neither life nor death could break, was Polly, my wife.

As the years went on, rich in blessings, echoes from the stormy story I have told sometimes broke upon their peace, but only to swell the pleasant music of my life into fuller harmony.

When, after their king and queen had perished, their cause was lost, Raoul de Grammont and his dark-eyed bride came as exiles to America, it was a joy to welcome this noble couple to Manor Dare, and to make them forget for a while the dark scenes of blood and terror they had left behind them. Without home, country, friends, fortune, the erstwhile Count de Grammont found, in the love of his Camille, solace for all he had lost.

They were a sunny-hearted, joyous pair, and established themselves happily in Baltimore, until the Restoration gave back to them and to Armand title and inheritance. But Elinor never would even revisit France, and though, as the years brought her back more than the olden grace and beauty, many a suitor strove to take her from us, she was always the White Rose of Manor Dare.

* * * * *

But the gladdest echoes from that storm-swept stretch of my life broke in triumphal music through the length and breadth of our happy land when, as the guest of the nation, General Lafayette visited America.

A grateful people went wild with enthusiastic welcome, white-robed children strewed his way with flowers, from the Halls of Congress to the poorest cabin, the veteran hero, the friend of Washington, was greeted with such acclaim as had never resounded through our land before. We had been on terms of friendly intercourse by letter and message for years, and our oldest son, Gilbert de Lafayette Dare, had visited his godfather and namesake, but the General and I had never met from the hour of our parting on the French frontier until in the midst of his triumphal progress down the Potomac, he stopped for a night at Manor Dare.

That we gave him right royal welcome there I need not say, for the years had brought me both wealth and power, and all that both could give I lavished freely in honor of my country's guest.

Polly, with her sturdy sons and fair daughters around her, was in her bravest array, the broad halls of Manor Dare were filled with a goodly company, the air pulsed with joyous music, rockets and bonfires blazed and sparkled far over river and shore.

As the General stood at my side on the pillared porch looking upon the festive scene, he placed his hand in the olden, kindly fashion on my shoulder.

"Ah, *mon ami*," he said, softly. "Heaven has blessed you—such a wife, such a home, such a country! But the son of Roger Dare deserves it all."

But to this Polly will not agree. She says—and Polly must have the last word even against a Marquis and General of France: "It is your mother's blessing, Carroll, that has fallen in all its fulness on our life and our home—the blessing she promised on that June morning of long ago."

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